

Ten Shekels and a Shirt

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And today I would like to speak to you from the theme “Ten Shekels and a Shirt,” as we find it here in chapter 17, Judges chapter 17. I will read the chapter and then I will read a portion also from the 18th and the 19th chapters so that the background might be clear in our minds.

“And there was a man of mount Ephraim, whose name was Micah.”¹

A little background, if you please. There was a situation where the Amorites refused to allow the people of the tribe of Dan to any freedom, access to Jerusalem and they crowded them up into Mount Ephraim. It is a sad thing when the people of God allow the world to crowd them into an awkward position. And so they were unable to get to Jerusalem and we find that out of this comes the problems we are about to see.

And there was a man of mount Ephraim, whose name was Micah. And he said unto his mother, the eleven hundred shekels of silver that were taken from thee, about which thou cursedst, and spakest of also in mine ears, behold, the silver is with me; I took it. And his mother said, Blessed be thou of the LORD, my son. And when he had restored the eleven hundred shekels of silver to his mother, his mother said, I had wholly dedicated the silver unto the LORD from my hand for my son, to make a graven image and a molten image: now therefore I will restore it unto thee. Yet he restored the money unto his mother; and his mother took two hundred shekels of silver, and gave them to the founder, who made thereof a graven image and a molten image: and they were in the house of Micah. And the man Micah had an house of gods, and made an ephod, and teraphim...²

This is, incidentally, the images that Rachel brought, you remember, the images is literally the word.

...and [he] consecrated one of his sons, who became his priest. In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes.

¹ Judges 17:1

² Judges 17:1-5

And there was a young man out of Bethlehemjudah of the family of Judah, who was a Levite, and he sojourned there. And the man departed out of the city from Bethlehemjudah to sojourn where he could find a place: and he came to mount Ephraim to the house of Micah, as he journeyed. And Micah said unto him, Whence comest thou? And he said unto him, I am a Levite of Bethlehemjudah, and I go to sojourn where I may find a place. And Micah said unto him, Dwell with me, and be unto me a father and a priest, and I will give thee ten shekels of silver by the year, and a suit of apparel, and thy victuals. So the Levite went in. And the Levite was content to dwell with the man; and the young man was unto him as one of his sons. And Micah consecrated the Levite; and the young man became his priest, and was in the house of Micah. Then said Micah, Now know I that the LORD will do me good, seeing I have a Levite to my priest.

In those days there was no king in Israel: and in those days the tribe of the Danites sought them an inheritance to dwell in; for unto that day all their inheritance had not fallen unto them among the tribes of Israel. And the children of Dan sent of their family five men from their coasts, men of valour, from Zorah, and from Eshtaol, to spy out the land, and to search it; and they said unto them, Go, search the land: who when they came to mount Ephraim, to the house of Micah, they lodged there. When they were by the house of Micah, they knew the voice of the young man the Levite: and they turned in thither, and said unto him, Who brought thee hither? and what makest thou in this place? and what hast thou here? And he said unto them, Thus and thus dealeth Micah with me, and hath hired me, and I am his priest. And they said unto him, Ask counsel, we pray thee, of God, that we may know whether our way which we go shall be prosperous. And the priest said unto them, Go in peace: before the LORD is your way wherein ye go.³

And now if you will go over to the latter part of the chapter, verse 14:

Then answered the five men that went to spy out the country of Laish, and said unto their brethren, Do ye know that there is in these houses an ephod, and teraphim, and a graven image, and a molten image? now therefore consider what ye have to do. And they turned thitherward, and came to the house of the young man the Levite, even unto the house of Micah, and saluted him. And the six hundred men appointed with their weapons of war, which were of the children of Dan, stood by the entering of the gate. And the five men that went to spy out the land went up, and came in thither, and took the graven image, and the ephod, and the teraphim, and the molten image: and the priest stood in the entering of the gate with the six hundred men that were appointed with weapons of war. And these went into Micah's house, and fetched the carved image, the ephod, and the teraphim, and the molten image. Then said the priest unto them, What do

³ Judges 17:5—18:6

ye? And they said unto him, Hold thy peace, lay thine hand upon thy mouth, and go with us, and be to us a father and a priest: is it better for thee to be a priest unto the house of one man, or that thou be a priest unto a tribe and a family in Israel? And the priest's heart was glad, and he took the ephod, and the teraphim, and the graven image, and went in the midst of the people. So they turned and departed, and put the little ones and the cattle and the carriage before them.⁴

Well, there is the story.

This isn't part of the actual history of the judges. This is a gathering together of some accounts that enable us to see the social conditions in that period when every man did as seemed right in his own eyes and there was no king in Israel. And so we understand that Micah was unable to get to Jerusalem. And perhaps for some kind of devout reason he decided he would build a replica of the temple on his own property. And so he built what he thought would be an appropriate building and he made the instruments of the tabernacle for this was part of the furnishings, the ephod included among them. But then he also gathered some of the things from the people around them, the teraphim, the images which God had forbidden.

But, you see, nevertheless there was this desire to get along as best he could so he took a little bit of the world and a little bit of Israel and that which had been revealed by God and he sort of mixed them up until he had something that he thought might please the Lord. And then, of course, he was delighted beyond words when a wandering young preacher came along from Bethlehem-Judah. He was a Levite. His mother was of the tribe of Judah though he himself was a Levite. God had given permission through Moses that the Levites might marry into other tribes and they might join themselves to other tribes.

So this young man didn't like the living—and every Levite was provided for. But he had wanderlust and an itching foot and so he started off to see if he couldn't do better for himself than was being done. He felt that being a Levite was good, but there should be opportunities associated with it. And so he came to the house of Micah and there he waited. There he was invited in and asked to become the priest.

And Micah made a deal with him. He said, "If you will be my priest, be my father and priest, then I will give you 10 shekels and a shirt." It says, "a suit," but you understand that the people of the day wore what would be called a jelebea, a long sort of an outside...well, I was going to say nightgown. I don't know if that is exactly what it is, but it is appropriate at least—something like that. And so he gave him a suit of clothes or a change of apparel and his food and 10 shekels a year. This was pretty good living for him and so he decided that he would stay there and enter into the mixture of idolatry and so on that was in the house of Micah.

⁴ Judges 18:14-21

But the people of Dan came along. They were supposed to have driven out the Amorites, but the Amorites were too difficult so they wanted to find someone that was a little easier to get out, to move. And they came to—as you have read—to Micah's house. And the Levite told them to go ahead. And then you find that they discovered that there were some people after the manner of the Zidonians at Laish and they were peaceful and no one was there to protect them. And so they figured this would be a very good place to take some land for themselves.

And when they came with the man that was set out to conquer this area they figured that since they had found the land though the young Levite it would be splendid to have his assistance. And so they went into the house of Micah, took all the things that he had made. And it had cost a good bit of money because at least two other shekels had been given for this one piece of furniture. And so they just took it all and made it theirs and took the Levite.

Rather hard on Micah, but you will notice that the young Levite was able to adjust himself to this. It was amazing how flexible he was and how easily he could accommodate himself to such changes when there was a little rationalization along the way. As soon as he could begin to see that it was far more important to serve a tribe than a one man family and he could minister to so many more. Why, he could see the wisdom of this. And he could justify it. And so with no real strain of conscience he could make the adjustment, hold his hand over his mouth while he took the furniture out of the little chapel that Micah had built.

But he was a wise man nonetheless. Rather than go along at the front, which put him in a place of danger, or at the rear, which put him in a place of danger—I say he was a wise man—he put himself right in the middle so that if Micah sent any of his servants to get him, he was safe with soldiers on every side.

What could we call this and how will it apply to our day and generation? Would I be out of line and order if I were to talk to you a little while about utilitarian religion and expedient Christianity and a useful God? I would like to call attention to the fact that our day is a day which the ruling philosophy is pragmatism. You understand what I mean by pragmatism perhaps. Pragmatism means if it works it is true, if it succeeds it is good. And the test of all practices, all principles, all truth—so called—is: Do they work? Do they work?

Now according to pragmatism the greatest failures of the ages have been some of the men God had honored most. For instance, whereas Noah was a mighty good ship builder his main occupation wasn't ship building. It was preaching. He was a terrible failure as a preacher. His wife, his three children and their wives was all he had. Seven converts in 120 years? You wouldn't call that particularly effective. Most mission boards would have asked the missionaries to withdraw long before this. I say as a ship builder he did quite well, but as a preacher he was a failure.

And then we come down across the years to another man by the name of Jeremiah. He was a mighty effective preacher, but ineffective as far as results were concerned. If you were to measure statistically how successful Jeremiah was, he would probably get a large ciphers for we find that he lost out with the people, he lost out with royalty. Even the ministerial association voted against him and wouldn't have anything to do with him. He had everything and everything failed. The only one he seemed to be able to please was God. But he is...otherwise he was a distinct failure.

And then we come to another well known person, the Lord Jesus Christ that was a failure from the judging from all of the standards. He never succeeded in organizing a church or a denomination. He wasn't able to build a school. He didn't succeed in getting a mission board established. He never had a book printed. He never was able to get any of the various criteria of or instruments that we find and are so useful. I am not being sarcastic at all. They are useful. And our Lord preached for three years, healed thousands of people, fed thousands of people. And yet when it was all over there were 120, 500 to whom he could reveal himself after his resurrection. And the day that he was taken one man said, "If all the others forsake you I am willing to die for you," and when he looked at this one he said, "Peter, you don't know your own heart. You are going to deny me three times before the cock crows this morning." And so all men forsook him and fled. And by every standard of our generation or any generation, our Lord was a signal failure.

The question comes, then, to this. What is the standard of success? And by what are we going to judge our lives and our ministries? And the question that you are going to ask yourself is: Is God an end or is he a means? And you have to decide very early in your Christian life whether you are viewing God as an end or a means.

Our generation is prepared to honor with signal honor anyone that is successful regardless of whether they have settled this problem or not. As long as they can get things done or get the job done or... "Well, it's working isn't it?" Then our generation is prepared to say, "Well, you have got to reckon with this."

And so we have got to ask ourselves at the very outset of our ministry and our pilgrimage and our walk: Are we going to be Levites who serve God for 10 shekels and a shirt, serve men, perhaps, in the name of God rather than God? For though he was a Levite and performed religious activities, he was looking for a place, a place which would give him recognition, a place which would give him acceptance, a place which would give him security, a place where he could shine in terms of those values which were important to him. All his old business was serving in religious activities and so it had to be a religious job and he was very happy when he found that Micah had an opening.

But he had decided that he was worth 10 shekels and a shirt and he was prepared to sell himself to anyone that would give that much. If somebody came along and gave more he would sell himself to them. But he put a value upon himself and he figured, then, that his religious service and his activities was just a means to an end. And by the same token God was the means to an end.

Now, in order to understand the implications of that in the 20th century we have got to go back 150 years, 100 years at least, to a conflict that attacked Christianity just after the great revivals in America with Finney. The spirit of God having been marvelously out-poured upon certain portions of our country, there came an open attack on our faith in Europe under the higher critics. Darwin had postulated his theory of evolution. Certain philosophers had adapted it to their philosophies and theologians had applied it to the Scripture. And so about 1850 you could mark the opening of a frontal attack upon the Word of God. Satan had always been insidiously attacking it, but now it was open season on the book, open season on the Church. And Voltaire could declare that he would live to see the Bible become a relic and just have its place only in museums, that it would be utterly destroyed by the arguments that he was so forcefully presenting against it.

Well, what was the effect of this? The philosophy of the day became humanism. And you can define humanism this way. Humanism is a philosophical statement that declares the end of all being is the happiness of man, that the reason for existence is man's happiness.

Now, according to humanism salvation is simply a matter of getting all the happiness you can out of life. If you are influenced by someone like Nietzsche who says that the only true satisfaction in life is power and that the power is its own justification and that, after all, the world is a jungle and it is therefore up to the man who would be happy to become powerful and become powerful by any means he can use for it is only in this position of ascendancy—or as we saw last night, in the worship of Molech—that one can be happy.

And this would produce, in due course, a Hitler who would take the philosophy of Nietzsche as his working operating principles and guide and would say of his people that we are destined to rule the world and therefore any means we can use to achieve this is our salvation.

Somebody else turns around and says, "Well, no, the end of being is happiness and happiness doesn't come from authority over people. Happiness come from sensual experience." And so you would have the type of existentialism that characterizes France today that has given rise to beatnikism in America and to the growth sensuality of our country, that since man is essentially a glandular animal whose highest moments of ecstasy comes from the exercise of his glands the salvation is simply defined the most desirable way to gratify this part of a person. And so this became the effect of humanism is the end of all being is the happiness of man.

And John Dewey, then, an American philosopher influencing education was able to persuade the educators that there were no absolute standards and children shouldn't be brought to any particular standard, that the end of education was simply to allow the child to express himself and expand on what he is and find his happiness in being what he wants to be. And so we had cultural lawless men when every man could do what seemed right in his own eyes and no God to rule over him. The Bible had been discounted and disallowed and disproved according to what they said and God had been dethroned. He didn't exist. He had no personal relationship to individuals. Jesus Christ was either a

myth or just a man, so they taught, and therefore the whole end of being with happiness is the individual would establish the standards of his happiness and interpret it.

Now religion, then, had to exist because there were so many people that made their living at it and so they had to find some way to justify their existence. So back about at that time in 1850 the church divided into two groups. The one group was the liberals who accepted the philosophy of humanism and tried to find some relevance by saying something like this to their generation. "We don't know that there is a heaven. We don't know that there is a hell. But we do know this. You have got to live for 70 years. And we know that there is a great deal of benefit from poetry, from high thoughts and noble aspirations. And therefore it is important for you to come to church on Sunday so that we can read some poetry, that we can give you some little adages and axioms and rules to live by and we can't say anything about what is going to happen when you die, but we will tell you this. If you will come every week and pay and help and stay with us we will put springs on your wagon and your trip will be more comfortable. And so we can't guarantee anything about what is going to happen when you die, but we say that if you will come along with us we will make you happier while you are alive."

And so this became the essence of liberalism. It has simply nothing more than to try and put a little sugar in the bitter coffee of the journey and sweeten it up for a time. This was all that it could say.

Well now the philosophy of the atmosphere is humanism. The chief end of being is the happiness of man.

There is another group of people that have taken umbrage with the liberals. This group are my people, the fundamentalists that say, "We believe in the inspiration of the Bible. We believe in the deity of Jesus Christ. We believe in hell. We believe in heaven. We believe in the death, burial and resurrection of Christ."

But remember, the atmosphere is that of humanism. And humanism says the chief end of being is the happiness of man. And humanism is like a miasma out of a pit that just permeates every place. And humanism is like an infection, an epidemic. It just goes everywhere. And so it wasn't long until we had this. The fundamentalists knew each other because they said, "We believe these things." They were men, for the most part, that had met God. But, you see, it wasn't long until having said, "These are the things that establish us as fundamentalists," the second generation said, "This is how we become a fundamentalist. Believe in the inspiration of the Bible. Believe in the deity of Christ. Believe in his death, burial and resurrection and thereby become a fundamentalist." And so it wasn't long until it got to our generation where the whole plan of salvation was to give intellectual assent to a few statements of doctrine and a person was considered a Christian because he could say, "uh-huh" at four or five places that he was asked to. And if he knew where to say "uh-huh" someone would pat him on the back, shake his hand, smile broadly and say, "Brother, you are saved."

And so it had gotten down to the place where salvation was nothing more than an assent to a scheme or a formula. And the end of this salvation was the happiness of man because humanism has penetrated.

And so if you were to analyze fundamentalism in contrast to liberalism of 100 years ago as it developed—for I am not pinpointing it in time—it would be like this. The liberal says the end of religion is to make man happy while he is alive. And the fundamentalist says the end of religion is to make man happy when he dies.

But, again, the end of all of the religion, it was so plain, was the happiness of man. And whereas the liberal says, “By social change and political order we are going to do away with slums. We are going to do away with alcoholism and dope addiction and poverty. And we are going to make heaven on earth and make you happy while you are alive. We don’t know anything about after that, but we want you to be happy while you are alive.” They went ahead to try to do it only to be brought up with a terrifying shock at the First World War and utterly staggered to the Second World War because they seemed to be getting nowhere fast.

And then the fundamentalists along the line are now tuning in on this same wave length of humanism until we find it something like this. “Accept Jesus so you can go to heaven. You don’t want to go to that old filthy nasty burning hell when there is a beautiful heaven up there. Now come to Jesus so that you can go to heaven.”

And the appeal could be as much to selfishness as a couple of men sitting in a coffee shop deciding to go to rob a bank to get something for nothing. And there is a way that you can give an invitation to sinners that just sounds for all the world like a plot to take up a filling station proprietor’s Saturday night earnings with out working for them.

And humanism is, I believe, the most deadly and disastrous of all the philosophical stench that has crept up through the grating over the pit of hell. And it has penetrated so much of our religion. And it is in utter and total contrast with Christianity. And, unfortunately, it is seldom seen.

And here we find Micah wants to have a little chapel and he wants to have a priest and he wants to have prayer and he wants to have devotion because, “I know the Lord will do me good.”⁵ And this is perfect then. And this is [?]. And the Levite comes along and falls right in with him because he wants a place. He wants 10 shekels and a shirt and his food. And so in order that he can have what he wants and Micah can have what they want they sell out God for 10 shekels and a shirt.

And this is the betrayal of the ages. And it is the betrayal in which we live and I don’t see how God can revive it until we come back to Christianity. It is indirect and total contrast with the vengeful humanism that is perpetrated in our generation in the name of Christ.

⁵ Paraphrase of Judges 17:13

I am afraid that it has become so subtle that it goes everywhere. What is it? In essence it is this, that this philosophical postulate that the end of all being is the happiness of man has been a sort of covered over with evangelical terms and biblical doctrine until God reigns in heaven for the happiness of man. Jesus Christ was incarnate for the happiness of man. All the angels exist in the...everything is for the happiness of man. And I submit to you that this is unchristian.

Isn't man happy? Did God intend to make man happy? Yes, but as a byproduct and not a prime product. What is...it was that good man that is so admired by the muddy thinkers of our day out there in Africa, dear Dr. Schweitzer, bless his heart. He is a brilliant man, a philosopher, a doctor, a musician, composer, undoubtedly a brilliant man. But Dr. Schweitzer is no more Christian than this road. And he would call it a personal insult if you were to say he was a Christian as he doesn't see Christ as having any relevance to his philosophy of life. And Dr. Schweitzer is a humanist. Dr. Schweitzer was sitting on the bow of a boat going up the broad Congo River toward his station watching the Belgian government officials with their high powered rifles shooting at the crocodiles sunning on the mud flats along the river. And they were excellent marksmen. And as they would use these dumb-dumb bullets that would explode inside the crocodile and just send them spinning up into the air from the contraction of muscles.

And you say, "How do you know so much about it?"

Well, from my shame I was guilty of the same thing in the Nile.

And they were there and this is what their sport was. They bagged them and they would keep count and they put strings around the place where their gun was and they had a little place for the gun and then they would tie knots so that they could see how many crocodiles they killed, a colossal waste of life. And it was there that Schweitzer saw the essence of his philosophy. And do you know what it is? Three words: Reverence for life, reverence for life, crocodile life, human life and other kinds of life.

My friend George Klein who was with us last week going back to the Gaboon was just about 50 or 60 miles away from Dr. Schweitzer's station. You know, Dr. Schweitzer is so convinced for the reverence of life that he doesn't like to sterilize his surgery. He has the dirtiest surgery in Africa because bacteria are life and he doesn't want to hurt any of the good bacteria with the bad so he sort of lets them all grow together.

And his organ broke. Someone had sent him out an organ and the means of playing it. And though Mr. Klein is an expert organist and an organ repairer as well, so he went over to see Dr. Schweitzer and Dr. Schweitzer said, "George, do you think you could fix my organ?"

He said, "I would be surprised. Let me try."

So he took the back off and to his amazement he discovered a huge nest of cockroaches. With characteristic American enthusiasm and zeal George started tromping all over the

cockroaches, not to let a one of them get away. And the good doctor came out, his hair standing straight as it had for a long time and because of his anger and he said, "You stop that right now."

And George says, "Why? They are ruining your organ."

He says, "That's all right. They were just being true to their nature." He said, "You can't kill those."

And so one of the boys came in and said, "It's all right, Mr. Klein." And he reached down very tenderly and picked them up and put them in a little bag and crimped the top and he put each cockroach in and they took them out in the jungle and they let them loose.

Now, here was the man that believed his philosophy, reverence for life, utterly committed to it, utterly consistent even when it came to the matter of a cockroach or a microbe.

Do you see? This is humanism. This is consistency.

Now I ask you: What is the philosophy of missions? What is the philosophy of evangelism? What is the philosophy of a Christian? If you will ask me why I went to Africa I will tell you I went primarily to improve on the justice of God. I didn't think it was right for anybody to go to hell without a chance to be saved. And so I went to give poor sinners a chance to go to heaven.

And I hadn't put it in so many words, but if you will analyze what I have just told you, do you know what it is? It is humanism, that I was simply using the provisions of Jesus Christ as a means to improve upon human conditions of suffering and misery.

And when I got to Africa I discovered that they weren't poor ignorant little heathen running around in the woods waiting for...looking for someone to tell them how to go to heaven, that they were monsters of iniquity that were living in utter and total defiance of far more knowledge of God than I ever dreamed they had. They deserved hell because they utterly refused to walk in the light of their conscience and the light of the law written upon their heart and the testimony of nature and the truth they knew. And when I found that out I assure you I was so angry with God that one occasion in prayer I told him that it was a mighty little thing he had done sending me out there to reach these people that were waiting to be told how to go to heaven. When I got there I found they knew about heaven and didn't want to go there and that they loved their sin and wanted to stay in it.

I went out there motivated by humanism. I had seen pictures of lepers. I had seen pictures of ulcers. I had seen pictures of native funerals and I didn't want my fellow human beings to suffer in hell eternally after such a miserable existence on earth. But it was there in Africa that God began to tear through the overlay of this humanism. And it was that day in my bedroom with the door locked that I wrestled with God. For here was I coming to grips with the fact that the people that I thought were ignorant and wanted to know how to go heaven and were saying, "Someone come and teach us," actually didn't

want to take time to talk with me or anybody else. They had no interest in the Bible and no interest in Christ and they loved their sin and wanted to continue in it. And I was to the place at that time where I felt the whole thing was a sham and a mockery and I had been sold a bill of goods. And I wanted to come home.

And there, alone in my bedroom as I faced God honestly with what my heart felt it seemed to me I heard him say, “Yes, will not the judge of all the earth do right? The heathen are lost and they are going to go to hell not because they haven’t heard the gospel. They are going to go to hell because they are sinners who love their sin and because they deserve hell. But I didn’t send them out there for them. I didn’t send you out there for their sakes.”

And I heard as clearly as I have ever heard—though it wasn’t with physical voice, but it was the echo of truth of the ages finding its way into an open heart—I heard God say to my heart that day something like this. “I didn’t send you to Africa for the sake of the heathen. I sent you to Africa for my sake. They deserved hell, but I love them. And I endured the agonies of hell for them. I didn’t send you out there for them. I sent you out there for me. Do I not deserve the reward of my sufferings? Don’t I deserve those for whom I died?”

And it reversed it all and changed it all and righted it all. And I wasn’t any longer working for Micah and 10 shekels and a shirt, but I was serving the living God. And I was there not for the sake of the heathen, but I was there for the Savior that had endured the agonies of hell for the heathen who didn’t deserve it. But he deserved them because he died for them.

Are you saved? Let me epitomize. Let me summarize. Christianity says, “The end of all being is the glory of God.”

Humanism says, “The end of all being is the happiness of man.”

And one was born in hell, the deification of man. And the other was born in heaven, the glorification of God. And one is Levites serving Micah and the other is a heart that is unworthy serving the living God because of the highest honor in the universe.

What about you? Why did you repent? I’d like to see some people repent on biblical terms again. It was George Whitefield knew it. He stood on Boston Common speaking to 20,000 people and he said, “Listen, sinners, you are monsters, monsters of iniquity. You deserve hell. And the worst of your crimes is that criminals though you have been you haven’t had the good grace to see it.” He said, “If you will not weep for your sins then your crime is against a holy God. George Whitefield will weep for you.” That man would put his head back. Then he would sob like a baby. Why? Because they were in danger of hell? No. But because they were monsters of iniquity that didn’t even see their sin or care about their crime.

Do you see the difference? Do you see the difference? The difference is here is some-

body trembling because he is going to be hurt in hell and he has no sense of the enormity of his guilt and no sense of the enormity of his crime and no sense of his insult against deity. He is only trembling because his skin is about to be singed, afraid.

And I submit to you that whereas fear is as good office work in preparing us for grace, it is no place to stop. The Holy Ghost doesn't stop there and that is the reason why no one can savingly receive Christ until they have repented. And no one can repent until they have been convicted. And conviction is the work of the Holy Ghost that helps the sinner to see that he is a criminal before God and deserves all of God's wrath and if God were to send him to the lowest corner of the devil's hell forever and 10 eternities, that he deserved it all and 100 fold more because he has seen his crimes. He has not been convinced he is caught, but he has seen his crime.

And this is the difference between 20th century preaching and the preaching of John Wesley. Wesley was a preacher of righteousness that exalted the holiness of God. And when he would stand there with the two to three hour sermons that he was accustomed to deliver in the open air and he would exalt the holiness of God and the law of God and the righteousness of God and the justice of God and the wisdom of his requirements and the justice of his wrath and his anger. And then he would turn to sinners and tell them of the enormity of their crimes and their open rebellion and their treason and their anarchy. The power of God would so descend upon the company that on one occasion it is reliably reported that when the people dispersed there were 1800 people lying on the ground utterly unconscious because they had had a revelation of the holiness of God. And in the light of that they had seen the enormity of their sin and God had so penetrated their minds and hearts that they had fallen to the ground.

It wasn't only in Wesley's day. It was also in America, New Haven, Connecticut, Yale, a man by the name of John Wesley Redfield led continuous ministry for three years in and around New Haven culminating in the great meetings in the Yale Bowl, the first of the Yale Bowls back in the 18th century. And the policemen were accustomed, during those days, if they saw someone lying on the ground to go up and smell his breath because if he had alcohol on his breath they would lock him up. But if he didn't he had Wesley Redfield's disease. And all you needed to do if anyone had Redfield's disease was just take him into a quiet place and leave them until they came to because if they were drunkards they did stop drinking and if they were cruel they stopped being cruel and if they were immoral they gave up their immorality. If they were a thief they returned what they had. Whereas they had seen the holiness of God and seen the enormity of their sin, the Spirit of God had driven them down into unconsciousness because of the weight of their guilt.

And somehow in this overspreading of the power of God sinners repented of their sin and came savingly to Christ. But there was a difference. It wasn't trying to convince good men that he was in trouble with a bad God, but that it was to convince bad men that they deserved the wrath and anger of a good God. And the consequence was repentance that led to faith and led to life.

Dear friends, there is only one reason, one reason for a sinner to repent and that is because Jesus Christ deserves the worship and the adoration and the love and the obedience of his heart, not because he will go to heaven. If the only reason you repented, dear friend, was to keep out of hell all you are is just a Levite serving for 10 shekels and a shirt. That's all. You are trying to serve God because he will do you good. But a repentant heart is a heart that has seen something of the enormity of the crime of playing god and denying the just and righteous God the worship and obedience that he deserves.

Why should a sinner repent? Because God deserves the obedience and love that he has refused to give him, not so that he will go to heaven.

If the only reason he repents is so that he will go to heaven, it is nothing but trying to make a deal or a bargain with God.

Why should a sinner give up all his sins? Why should he be challenged to do it? Why should he make restitution when he is coming to Christ? Because God deserves the obedience that he demands.

I have talked with people that have no assurance of sins forgiven. They want to feel saved before they are willing to commit themselves to Christ. But I believe that the only ones whom God actually witnesses by his Spirit they are born of him are the people—whether they say it or not—that come to Jesus Christ and say something like this, “Lord Jesus, I am going to obey you and love you and serve you and do what you want me to do as long as I live even if I go to hell at the end of the road because you are worthy to be loved and obeyed and served. And I am not trying to make a deal with you.”

Do you see the difference? Do you see the difference between being a Levite serving for 10 shekels and a shirt or a Micah building a chapel because God will do you good and someone that repents for the glory of God?

Why should a person come to the cross? Why should a person embrace death with Christ? Why should a person be willing to go in identification down to the cross and into the tomb and up again? I will tell you why. Because it is the only way that God can get glory out of a human being. If you say it is because you will get joy or peace or blessing or success or payment it is nothing but a Levite serving for 10 shekels and a shirt.

There is only one reason for you to go to the cross, dear young person. And that is because until you come to the place of union with Christ in death you are defrauding the Son of God of the glory that he could get out of your life. For no flesh shall glory in his sight. And until you have understood the sanctifying work of God by the Holy Ghost taking you into union with Christ in death and burial and resurrection you have to serve with what have and all you have is that which is under the sentence of death. Human personality and human nature and human strength and human energy, and God will get no glory out of that.

And so the reason for you to go to the cross isn't that you are going to get victory. You will get victory. It isn't that you are going to have joy. You will have joy. But the reason for you to embrace the cross and press through until you can know that you can testify with Paul, "I am crucified,"⁶ isn't what you are going to get out of it, but what he will get out of it for the glory of God.

By the same token why aren't you pressed through to know the fullness of the Holy Spirit? Why aren't you pressed through to know the fullness of Christ? I will tell you why. Because the only possible way that Jesus Christ will get glory out of a life that he has redeemed with his precious blood is when he can fill that life with his presence and live through his own life.

The genius of our faith wasn't that we were going to go through the motions like a Levite, we were hired to serve God. No, no. The genius of our faith is that we had come to the place where we knew we could do nothing and all we could do was to present the vessel and say, "Lord, Jesus you will have to fill it. And everything that is done will have to be done by you and for you."

But, oh, I know so many people that are trying to know the fullness of God so that they can use God.

A young preacher came to me down in West Virginia, Huntington, West Virginia. "Brother Reidhead, I have got a great church. We have got a wonderful Sunday school program, got a radio ministry, growing. But I feel a personal need and a personal lack. I need to be baptized with the Holy Ghost. I need to be filled with the Spirit. And someone told me God had done something for you and I wanted you to help me."

I looked at the fellow. And do you know what he looked like? Me. He just looked like me. I just saw in him everything that was in me. You thought I was going to say me before. No, listen, dear heart. If you have ever seen yourself you'll know that you are never going to be anything else then you are. For in me and my flesh there is no good thing.⁷ But like me.

He was like a fellow driving up in a big Cadillac, you know, to someone standing at the filling station say, "Fill it up, Bud, with the highest octane you have got."

Well, that's the way it looked. He wanted power for his programs. And God is not going to be a means to anyone's end.

I said, "I am awfully sorry. I don't think I can help you."

He said, "Why?"

⁶ Galatians 2:20

⁷ Paraphrase of Romans 7:18

“I don’t think you are ready.” I said, “Well, suppose you consider yourself coming up with a Cadillac. You have talked about your program. You have talked about your radio. You talked about your Sunday school and church. It’s very good. You have done wonderfully well without the power of the Holy Spirit.”

That is what the Chinese Christian said, you know when he got back to China.

“What impressed you most about America?”

He said, “The great things Americans can accomplish without God.”

And he had accomplished a great deal, admittedly, without God. Now he wanted something, power to accomplish his ends even further.

I said, “No, no. You are going...you are sitting behind the wheel and you are saying, ‘Give me power so I can go.’ You won’t work. You have got to slide over.”

But I knew that rascal because I knew me. I said, “No, it will never do. You have got to get in the back seat.”

And I could see him leaning over and grabbing the wheel.

“No,” I said, “It will never do in the back seat.” I said, “Before God will do anything from you do you know what you have got to do?”

He said, “What?”

I said, “You have got to get out of the car, take the keys around, open up the trunk lid, hand the keys to the Lord Jesus, get in the trunk, slam the lid down, whisper through the keyhole, ‘Lord, look. Fill her up with anything you want and you drive. It is up to you from now on.’”

And that is why so many people, you know, do not enter in to the fullness of Christ, because they want to become a Levite with 10 shekels and a shirt. They have been serving Micah, but they think if they had the power of the Holy Ghost they could serve the tribe of Dan. It will never work, never work.

There is only reason for God meeting you and that is to bring you to the place where in repentance you have been pardoned for his glory and in victory you have been brought to the place of death that he might reign. And in his fulness Jesus Christ is able to live and walk in you. And your attitude is the attitude of the Lord himself who said, “I can do nothing of myself. I can’t speak of myself. I don’t make plans for myself. My only reason for being is the glory of God in Jesus Christ.”

If I were to say to you, “Come to be saved so you can go to heaven, come to the cross so that you can have joy and victory, come to the fulness of the Spirit so that you can be satisfied,” I would be falling into the trap of humanism.

I am going to say to you, dear friend, if you are out here with out Christ you come to Jesus Christ and serve him as long as you live whether you go to hell at the end of the way because he is worthy. I say to you, Christian friend, you come to the cross and join him in union in death and enter into all the meaning of death itself in order that he can have glory. I say to you, dear Christian, if you do not know the fulness of the Holy Ghost come and present your body a living sacrifice and let him fill you so that he can have the purpose for his coming fulfilled in you and get glory through your life.

It is not what you are going to get out of God. It is what is going to get out of you.

Let’s be done, once and for all, with utilitarian Christianity that makes God a means instead of the glorious end that he is. Let’s resign. Let’s tell Micah we are through. We are no longer going to be as priests serving for 10 shekels and a shirt. Let’s tell the tribe of Dan we are through and let’s come and cast ourselves at the feet of the nail pierced Son of God and tell him that we are going to obey him and love him and serve him as long as we live because he is worthy.

Two young Moravians heard of an island in the West Indies where an atheist British owner had 2000 to 3000 slaves. And the owner had said, “No preacher, no clergyman will ever stay on this island. If he is shipwrecked we will keep him in a separate house until he has to leave, but he is never going to talk to any of us about God. I am through with all that nonsense.” Three thousand slaves from the jungles of Africa brought to an island in the Atlantic and there to live and die without hearing of Christ.

Two young Moravians heard about it. They sold themselves to the British planter and used the money they received from their sale—for he paid no more than he would for any slave—to pay their passage out to his island for he wouldn’t even transport them. And as the ship left the river at Hamburg, let its pier in the river at Hamburg and was going out into the North Sea carried with the tide the Moravians had come Herrnhut to see these two lads off in their early 20s, never to return again. For this wasn’t a four year term. They had sold themselves into lifetime slavery simply that as slaves they could be as Christians for these others were.

The families were there weeping for they knew they would never see them again. And they wondered why they were going and questioned the wisdom of it. And as the gap widened and the houses had been cast off and were being curled up there on the pier and the young boys saw the widening gap, one lad with his arm linked through the arm of his fellow raised his hand and shouted across the gap the last words that were heard from them. They were these. “May the Lamb that was slain receive the reward of his sufferings.”

And this became the call of Moravian missions. And this is the only reason for being, that the Lamb that was slain may receive the reward of his suffering.