

Regeneration and True Christian Unity

Gospel Preaching Mission

By Paul Washer

sermonaudio.com

Bible Text: Ezekiel 36:22-27; Jeremiah 31:31-34

Preached on: Sunday, March 25, 2007

Jefferson Park Baptist Church

2505 Jefferson Park Avenue
Charlottesville, Virginia 22903

Website: www.jpbc.org

Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/jeffparkchurch

Again, it is a... wow... powerful voice there.

It is a great privilege to be here and I am going to move around a bit tonight in texts. I want to talk... my wife says one of my great problems is I am always trying to cram 30 sermons into one and she is pretty much right about that. But I want to talk this evening about how can we know that... I mean some people say, "Well, you know, how can you be sure that a genuine Christian will really have these things in their life? I mean how can... you know, how can we be sure that a Christian is going to grow in sanctification? How can you be sure that, you know, the Christian is going to cooperate with God?"

And so I want to answer that question.

But then there is also another thing that I want to talk about a bit and that is we hear a great deal about radical depravity and men are radically depraved and we could go on and speak about that for quite a bit of time. But sometimes I will listen to Christians and they will use basically the same type of language to describe themselves.

"Well, I am just an old wretch, wicked. My heart is just wicked and who can know it," and all of these different things.

And after they finish I always ask them this question. Well, if your heart is that way, just what did God do to your heart when he regenerated to you? Just what happened? I mean, is it true that the Christian still is just wicked by nature with a wicked, fallen Adamic heart? I mean what is going on? If that is true, then just what happened to us when we got saved?

And I want to look at some of these things.

First of all let's go to Ezekiel and I usually like to take this entire passage, but I am not going to do that tonight because I want to hit on a couple of things in Ezekiel and a few in Jeremiah. But in Ezekiel chapter 36 verses 22 on through—my goodness—on through 27 and so forth is one of the greatest descriptions of, illustrations anyways of regeneration.

And Ezekiel seems to be prone to that, the Spirit of God is just tremendous manifestation of descriptions of what happens when a man is born again.

We have the question that is given to Ezekiel from God. "Ezekiel, can these dead bones live?"

And we see a wonderful illustration of regeneration when the Spirit of God brings these bones together and puts sinew upon them and flesh and breathes life into them. And so here I want us to look at a few things.

In verses 22 and 23 just read it quickly.

Therefore say to the house of Israel, "Thus says the Lord GOD, "It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for My holy name, which you have profaned among the nations where you went. I will vindicate the holiness of My great name which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst. Then the nations will know that I am the LORD," declares the Lord GOD, "when I prove Myself holy among you in their sight."¹

Now, all throughout this what are we hearing over and over? Israel profaned the name of God. Israel profaned the name of God with their idolatry, their immoralities and so on and so forth. And so Israel is called on here not to look within itself to find a reason why God would save them.

God said, "I did not save you because of you."

And that is true. That is true for the entire course of the Christian life. He does not save men because of men, but in spite of men.

He says this. "I saved you for the sake of my own name, for my own glory." And then he goes on to say that after he saves them the nations will know that he is the Lord.

Now, God had made covenant promises with Israel and because of their disobedience and their wickedness they were judged and, in a sense, in that judgment, you know, there was the question of: Is God powerful enough to create a people and to preserve that people? And when Israel is taken off into captivity it looked like every promise God had made was unfulfilled. But by redeeming Israel and continuing his work he got glory for his name.

And what I want you to see here that is so very important, he got glory here for his name and through his saving work in the nation of Israel, the nations knew that he was the Lord, the one and true God, because no God acts this way. All the other gods of all the other nations are false. This one true God is the only one who truly makes covenant promises and saves his people.

¹ Ezekiel 36:22-23.

And so one of the great purposes of the saving work of God among his people is to get glory for his name.

Now, what do we have today in America? We have something quite the opposite. We have a gospel, by and large, that is very impotent, very reduced from the true gospel that invites men into the fellowship of the church if they have prayed a prayer or gone through some little rite or nodded their head. And then, because of our belief in such things as you can be a Christian and be totally carnal all the days of your life and because churches refuse to obey Jesus Christ and practice compassionate and merciful church discipline, because we claim to love people more than Jesus does... I hear people say all the time, "Oh, we are not going to practice church discipline. We love people."

Jesus loves people and he commanded his Church to practice church discipline. So you are really out on a wire when you say things like that.

But because we don't practice church discipline, by and large, because our gospel is not a full gospel, we admit people into the church that really have no understanding and when they stay in the church and live in wicked ways the nations look at the church and they don't say, "My goodness, behold the power and faithfulness of God," but they mock God and the prophecy is fulfilled that the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of us.

So, you see, one of the things you have got to realize, when we talk about church, church is not about people. I want you to understand that. It is not primarily about people and it is not primarily about meeting people's needs. Church is about the glory of God. It is.... One man who has a tremendously large church... they... you know, he goes around everywhere teaching people how he did it. And one of the ways he did is he went to all the people in the magnificent city that he is a part of, he went to all of the people that was there and he handed out questionnaires: What do you want in a church?

And so basically he went to all the lost, carnal people in the entire city and asked them a question: What do you want in the church? And when they filled out the questionnaire he made a church that was according to what they wanted.

You say, "Well, that is terrible."

But don't we do the same? I mean, it is all to degrees, isn't it? How far are you willing to go? Do you want to be a biblical church? Because it is only a biblical church that brings glory to God.

You see, as a minister of the gospel I will not be judged one day if I have a church of 10 or 10,000. I will be judged on my truthfulness, my dedication, my devotion to Scripture. And as a church that seeks to be—I know you do. I know your leaders seek to be and many of you—seeks to be truly a biblical church and to be constantly moving in that

direction, you have got to see that the impetus here is the glory of God and his reputation among men and among the nations.

Now as we go on here we see a perfect illustration of what happens when someone gets saved. But before we go to that, I want to talk to you about one other thing about reputation.

When God redeemed Israel out of the land of Egypt, he is bringing them through the wilderness and they commit a heinous crime and God tests Moses and God says to Moses, “Moses, basically get out of the way. I am going to destroy them and I will make a people out of you.”

And Moses stands as the intercessor and he says, “No.” And this is his argument. “If you destroy Israel here in the wilderness, your enemies will say that although you had the power to redeem Israel from Egypt, you did not have the power to bring them into the land you promised to them.”

So one of the things I want you to see in the work of salvation, we can always count on that he who began a good work will finish it. Why? Because his reputation is riding upon the work he is doing. This is about his name and not yours. So God never begins a work of salvation that he doesn't finish.

Now, people will take that and say, “Yes, of course. I mean, you know, he saves you and no matter what you do, he is going to take you on into glory.”

No, that is not true because salvation is not just you being redeemed from hell and then one day you being placed into heaven. Salvation is, past tense, the moment you believed you were saved from condemnation and wrath and it is present tense. In the life of the believer you are being saved from the power of sin. And it is future tense, one day you will be totally delivered from a fallen world and flesh.

And so when I say that he who began a good work in you will finish it doesn't mean that Bubba is going to get saved, live like hell and one day go to heaven. But it means this. If Bubba truly gets saved, God is going to work in his life all the days of his life, transforming him, changing him, loving him, teaching him, disciplining him and then one day bringing him into glory. And God is going to do it and make sure it happens because his name is riding upon it. Do you see that?

Now, this is what he says in verse 24.

Now I want to read this with emphasis on the personal pronoun I because it is referring to God, God here speaking.

For I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands and bring you into your own land.

Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.²

Now notice some things. First of all, I. God says, “I” and then he says, “will.”

Most people have this idea that God saves a man and in salvation you have got all these lost people and you have this impotent deity that is on the throne weeping and wringing his hands saying, “Oh, I just want to save so many people, but no one wants to cooperate with me so I can’t do anything.”

That is not true. God has called forth a people and he resurrects them from the dead and makes them his people.

But then many people think that there is God on the throne going, “Oh, I have got all these Christians, all these children and they just won’t obey me. They just won’t follow me. I just want them so much to hear my voice and follow me, but they just won’t cooperate.”

That is not true either. That is a lie. It is not biblical. It is not scriptural and it brings no glory to God.

Listen to what God is saying here. He is saying, “I will take you out of the nations. I will take you out of the nations. I will bring you into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water on you and you will be clean. I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and all your idols. I will take out your heart of stone. I will give you a heart of flesh. I will put my Spirit in you and,” listen to this folks, “I will make you follow my commands.”

Now, do you see an impotent deity there? Do you see a God wringing his hands, just hoping someone will cooperate? No. You see a God who says, “I am going to create a new people. And in that new people every one of them is going to have a heart for me and they are all going to follow me and I will see to it that the work I began in them, I will finish it.”

You see? So much for they have been a carnal Christian for 20 years.

Now he says, first of all, in 20 and 24 he says, “I will take you from the nations.”³

“I will separate you. I will separate you from the rest of the world.”

² Ezekiel 36:24-27.

³ Ezekiel 36:24.

Now, let me ask you a question. Is that a reality in your life? Can you point to God's work of separation in your life, of him separating you from the ways of this world, the things of this world, the desires of this world, the futile thinking of this world? Can you see God doing a work of separation in your life, separating from all that displeases him? Can you see him working that way? Can you look back in the past and see God working to separate you from all the things that are contrary to his nature and will? Can you see a work of separation going on?

Have there been times when even you wanted to bolt and yet you knew that it didn't matter, God had you caged in. You belong to him. He was in front of you, behind you, beside you, separating you and making you his own and jealously and zealously guarding over you. Is that a reality in your life? Can you look back and see how God has separated you from the world?

But not only separate you from all that is evil, but he says also, "I will...bring you into your own land."⁴

He will not only separate you from all that is evil, he will bring you to himself.

You see, separation just in itself is nothing more than being a Pharisee, legalism. Some people's Christianity is, "I don't this. I don't do that and I don't do those things." But separation, biblical separation has the purpose of I am leaving that which is dark. The darkness is now passing away, the true light is already shining. I am growing in Christ. I am being pulled away from these things of the world in order to cling to God, in order to draw near to him, to live in his courts, to live in his ways, to feel his pleasure, to fellowship with him.

Is that a reality in your life? Can you see God working in your life to separate you from things that are displeasing to him, from things, temporal things of this world and drawing you to himself in fellowship? Can you see that in your life?

Now, he goes on in verse 25 and he says, ""Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean."⁵

Now look at that. You will be clean.

I tell a story. I was raised on a cattle ranch and you could always tell boys who were either farmers or ranches because every crevice of their body had dirt in it. Under my neck is dirt, you know, in the creases of your arms dirt, everywhere dirt. You just played all the time outside.

And I can remember, you know, I would go in the house. Mom would say, "Take a bath." And one time I was about nine or 10 years old and I walked in the house about eight o'clock at night in the summer and she said, "Go ahead and jump in the bath."

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ezekiel 36:25.

And I said, “Mom, I don’t think I will tonight.”

My mom looked at me and she said, “You will take a bath.” End of story.

And so I go in there. I mean, behold, look at this. My mother has power, more power than your version of Jesus. My mom can make me take a bath. Your Jesus can’t make you do anything. No, my friend, he says, “I will sprinkle clean water on you. You will be clean.”

And then I go in there and I get in the bathtub. And you know how... I don’t know if you have had boys, but this is the way boys do it. They love swimming holes, mud holes, fishing holes, every kind of hole you can imagine. You get him in a shower and I don’t know, it is like acid rain. And so, you know, a little bit of water will come out and I would do like this and then I would grab a white towel and rub. It would be solid black. And I would come out of there, you know, just... and my mom...

My mom could haul hay better than any man you have ever seen. She could wrestle cattle, anything. My mom had so many calluses on her hands that you prayed that she used a wash cloth because if she got a hold of your body it was like a rasp.

My mom took one look at that towel of hers, she took one look at me, she put me back in that water. When my mom got done with me, the shekinah glory of God was coming forth from my body. She took off several layers of skin I am convinced of it.

Isn’t it amazing that my mother has more authority over me than most people’s view of Jesus Christ and his authority over them?

God says, “No. You are my people. I will clean you. I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and all your idols.”

Now if I could describe my Christian life in the last 25 years, if I could describe my Christian life, it would be this. God being loving and faithful to cleanse me from my filthiness and my idols.

That would be it. That is one of the greatest realities in my life.

You know, all this talk, all these young guys. I want God to use me. I want God to use me. It is really not what it is all cracked up to be. That is not the goal. I want God to change me. I don’t want to be what I was. I want to be like Christ and he will be faithful.

I sing a song to my little boys. Well, I did until they got old enough to know I had a terrible voice. But when I was trying to put them to sleep I would always sing this song.

My sons, I am weak and I am trembling.
For the Lord I am always remembering,
Oh, what a strong shepherd holds you in his arms,

He will break you and make you his own.

I feel like I have been broken into a trillion pieces all by the hand of my God, not by the work of the devil. My body is broken with arthritis. Both of my hips have been replaced. My wrist is made out of metal. My elbow is soon to be replaced they tell me. I have got more metal in me than a Tonka truck. I hurt all the time. My fingers hurt right now. I bless the name of my God because he has used these things in my life to do what? Cleanse me from my filthiness and from my idolatry.

Is that a reality in your life, to be like him, to be conformed to his image.

I remember one time before I had my hips replaced I lived in chronic pain. The doctors had me on medication and everything and I remember walking out one time in Peru. It was kind of drizzling. It was horrid. I was out on this old patio and it was dirty and I was hurting so bad I was just crying. And I remember crying out to God, “Oh, God, why, why, why?”

And, no, I didn’t hear a voice and I didn’t impress, but I remembered. I looked. It was list, just almost like a film, all those times my college years crying out to God, “Oh, God, I don’t care if you have to...”

You know how you prayed when you were a wild college new convert. “God, just kill me. Grind me into powder. Do anything, but make me like Jesus.”

If I had known what that meant I would have never been brave enough to pray it.

You know, one of the most horrifying statements in the Bible is, “God will give you the desires of your heart.”⁶ It really is.

You say, “What is wrong with that?”

Well, let me give you an illustration. The Pharisees desired to be honored as men. God gave them their reward in full and then they went to hell.

I remember there was this guy in seminary with me and, man, he was, I guess, wealthy or something. I mean he had a Jacuzzi, a seminary student, you know. Lived in this real nice apartment, drove this great car and all this stuff and he was always saying, “But, you know, Paul, disciple me.”

I said, “Man, I am not wasting my time on you,” because all he ever talked about was he wanted to be a pastor of a big church with a big TV ministry. That is what he was all about. And I mean if some important person from the SBC came on campus, you can be assured this guy would be snooping him out. He was all about knowing the right people. It was unbelievable.

⁶ See Psalm 37:4.

Years later I come back from the jungle and I am preaching somewhere. I think it was Tennessee or something and the preacher has a television on after church and Adrian Rogers was on or something and we are in there eating and all of the sudden Adrian Rogers goes off and I hear this new program comes on. You this, you know, *Day of Power*, or something like that. Be all you can be or something. And I thought, well, you know...

So I am eating and all of the sudden I hear a voice. I go, “Man, I know that voice. I know that voice. Who in earth is that?”

And it was that guy preaching to a great big church of lost people that... and what he was preaching was nothing more than baptized psychology, self help and your best life now.

And I went... well, God gives you the desires of your heart.

I have other friends. I can remember doing nothing but them crying out, “I want to be like Jesus.” They are pastoring in tiny little congregations in obscure places and they are like a rose in God’s garden because they desired the better things.

You see, it is about conformity to the image of Christ and God will do it. It is not a question of anything. It is not a question of if he will. He will do it if you belong to him. He will not let you go. He will discipline you.

Now, let me say something about discipline. And, again, I am trying to put 30 sermons into one. A lot of people think discipline is a result of a sin. That is not always true. There is two types of discipline. There is discipline as a result of sin. We all know about that, when God may discipline us for sin. But there is another way in which God discipline. It is like training.

For example, I had weak legs. I wanted to be a good basketball player, so every day after we would feed the cattle, I would run a mile home behind the truck with ankle weights on and all kinds of stuff. I had hurt really bad, but it was training.

In the same way God will discipline his children. When they stray off the line, he will discipline them for sin and bring them back. But he will also discipline them to greater godliness and it is not necessarily a result of sin, ok?

Now, let me just throw something out to you. “Jacob I loved, Esau I hated.”⁷

Now the word “hated” there in the Hebrew means hated. If it meant something else they would have translated something else, all right? It means hated. It means that God loved Jacob and he hated Esau. Ok, that is exactly what it means.

⁷ See Romans 9:13.

But when you look at it, you realize that Esau, God fulfilled every promise that he ever promised Esau. Esau was so wealthy and so prosperous when Jacob came back into the land that he needed nothing from Jacob.

So how is it that God demonstrated love towards Jacob and hatred towards Esau? In this. You never see one time God intervening in disciplining, correcting and training Esau, never once. But you see God beating the living daylights out of Jacob every day of his life. And that is the manifestation of the love of God. He let Esau go. He would not let Jacob go. And when Jacob came back over into that land, he was limping and broken and had a new name. Do you see?

God will cleanse you from your filthiness and your idols.

Now this is also a great promise. It is a new covenant promise, very important those of you that have besetting sins. Now this does not teach that one day on this earth all of us are going to be perfect, not at all. We will always struggle with sin. But, it is talking, you can have hope here about besetting sins that God... you need to believe him. He will work in your life and continue working in your life so that some sin that is a besetting sin will be overcome sooner or later. It will be. He will see to it because there is a great difference between a Christian who fights against sin, struggles with sin, lives in brokenness and repentance and a Christian who is under the yoke of a besetting sin that is seeking to master it.

So he gives us hope here of a freedom and a greater sanctification.

Now here is how he is going to do it in verse 26.

“Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.”⁸

What does that mean? Well, first of all, we should be very careful not to do hyper literal interpretation, here. A lot of people say, “heart of flesh, it must be a wicked heart.”

No. In this case flesh refers to something good, as opposed to a heart of stone.

If you had a statue of a man up here made of stone, you could prick him, kick him, prod him, beat him, electrocute him, whatever you wanted to do, he would not respond. Why would he not respond? He is an inanimate object. He is stone.

But you take a man, a giant man, whatever and if he is a man of flesh you can do all those things and he is going to move. He is going to flinch. He is going to respond to the stimuli. That is what he is saying here. “I am going to take out your heart of stone that cannot respond to divine stimuli, your dead heart of stone. And I am going to exchange it for a heart of flesh, recreated in the image of God in true righteousness and true holiness that will respond to me.”

⁸ Ezekiel 36:26.

So how can we be certain that God is going to accomplish the work in his people? Because of the work of regeneration. You see, salvation is not merely a human decision. It is a supernatural work of God whereby he literally makes you a new creature with a new nature, with a new heart, ok?

Now, and he goes on and he says, “I will put my Spirit within you.”⁹

Wow. The very Spirit of God that hovered above the waters, creating the universe, he is going to put his creating Spirit, this recreating Spirit within you and “Cause you to walk in My statutes,”¹⁰ he says.

This word can also be translated, “Make you walk in my statutes.”

“And you will be careful to observe My ordinances.”¹¹

Why? He is going to be see to it. Why is he going to see to it? Because his reputation is online. How is he going to see to it? Through coercion and manipulating you? No. He is going to change you and give you a willing heart. That is how.

Let me share with you something about the bondage of the will. People get all upset when I say that a lost man can’t respond to God. Well, it is true. A lost man cannot respond to God in the same way a dead man cannot respond to a doctor who says, “Hey, get up and come with me to the hospital and I think we can fix your problem,” putting the proverbial cart before the horse, aren’t we?

You see, here is the way it works. When you hear that men cannot come to God apart from the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit you say, “Well, that is not fair. I mean if men can’t come to God, then it is not men’s fault.”

Well, you need to understand why men can’t come to God.

About Joseph’s brothers it says this, that Joseph’s brothers could not speak a kind word to him.

Now, if you study the guys, all his brothers, they weren’t mute. They all talked rather well. It says they could not. That is the language, they could not speak a kind word to Joseph. They had tongues. They had lips. They had brains. They talked all the time.

So how is it they could not speak a kind word to Joseph? Because they hated him. It was their hatred towards Jacob that made them totally incapable of speaking a kind word to him. And sometimes people say that, you know, “Oh, I could never forgive him because I hate him so much for what he has done to me,” right?

⁹ Ezekiel 36:27.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

You can, you won't. And you won't because the enmity in your heart is so great against that person.

When I say men cannot come to God, they cannot come to God because they hate him so much and that is the moral failure and that is cause for blame and guilt and judgment, ok?

So how does anybody get saved? Have you ever thought about that?

Here is the way some preachers will look at it. I hear preachers say this all the time. If we just show the world Jesus they will be saved. No, because Jesus showed the world Jesus and they didn't get saved.

Now, let me set up the scenario for you. Let's imagine we have a curtain right here and Jesus is standing behind it. Now some people think if we will just reveal Jesus, fun the curtain, pull back the curtain and show Jesus people will get saved.

No, they won't. Why? Because you forget the audience is blind. They are blinded by their own hatred. Have you ever heard that type of language?

"That man is just blinded by his hatred. He is blinded by his racism."

Men are blinded by their hatred toward God.

So you pull back the curtain, whatever they see of Christ will make them hate him more. And that is why every bit of knowledge they get about God, they restrain it and push it down because they don't want any part with God.

So some preachers say, "You are right, brother Paul. We need to preach Christ, pull back that curtain and pray that the Holy Spirit opens up their eyes so that they can see him."

Well, that is problem two. Why? If you open up their eyes and they see Jesus as he really is the only thing that is going to come out of their mouth is, "Crucify him," because they have a heart that hates him.

So in order for a man to come to Christ you have to preach Christ, the Holy Spirit has to give sight to the blind and he has to give them a new heart, recreated in the image of God and true righteousness and true holiness and with that new heart that is conformed to the image of God, they look at the image of God and are irresistibly drawn to him in love.

That is the way it works. And the ones that are drawn to him, he continues working in them to change them and he puts his Spirit within them and he causes them to walk, not out of coercion, manipulation or fear. It is just they are seeing more and more of him and they are being more and more conformed to his image and the Spirit is strengthening them more and more so that they are growing in the things of God and obedience to his commands.

Now, I want us to go for a moment to Jeremiah 31. This passage of Scripture is the longest Old Testament quotation in the New Testament, Hebrews chapter eight it is quoted in almost its entirety.

Verse 31 of chapter 31:

Behold, days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them," declares the LORD.¹²

Now what kind of covenant did God make with Israel when he brought them out of the house of Egypt? Well, here is what...

First of all, let me just share something with you folks. You need to understand this. Israel came out of Egypt. The nation of Israel came out of Egypt. It was a physical nation, descendants of a physical man by blood, the man Abraham. It was a physical people just like calling the Mongolians or calling the Arabs or calling the Filipinos.

All right. It was a physical nation. Most people have this idea that Israel, everybody in Israel was saved, everyone in Israel was a God fearer, everyone in Israel was regenerate in the working of the Spirit.

No. Israel, by and large, Israel was a physical nation and only a small portion of that nation actually was God fearing. You see a remnant, always a remnant. Those people that came out of Egypt no sooner did they get out of Egypt they are in idolatry, constant disobedience and murmuring. Do not think that this is a regenerate group of people and they are all going to heaven. It is not. It is a physical nation. And in that physical nation was a small group of people who had truly been regenerate, whose hearts had truly been changed. They were a remnant.

Now he brings this physical nation out to the Mount and Moses goes up and gets some laws, 10 laws, 10 words written on tablets of stone. And he brings these tablets of stone down the mountain, these external blocks of stone with the commandments written on them and places them before the people.

Now the people are basically unregenerate, lost, wicked, without the Spirit. And what does Romans six and seven tell us about that? The more the lost carnal man has the law pressed upon him, the more he kicks against it and fights against it. And so what do you have? In the covenant with Israel you have tablets of stone being brought down. You have 10 Commandments, external, being brought to a group of people whose hearts were never changed and didn't love God.

¹² Jeremiah 31:31-32.

But he says, “The days are coming when I will make a new covenant that won’t be like the covenant I made with them.”

And how will that new covenant be? He says in verse 33, “‘But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,’ declares the LORD, ‘I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.’”¹³

He says the days are coming when I will create a new people and they will not be just a physical nation and I will not bring some external law down and try to place it upon them, but I will create a new people and I will literally change their hearts. I will be their God. They will be my people and I will take my law and it will literally become a part of them. I will write it on their hearts. And not just on a small remnant of them, on every one of them. All my people each and every one of them from the least of them to the greatest of them will all have new hearts and I will write my laws on their hearts so that it comes down and it says this, verse 34. “They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they will all know Me.”¹⁴

In Israel that wasn’t the case, was it? A small remnant of people truly knew God. The rest were idolaters and everything else. He says, “That is not going to be the case. I am going to create a new people. I will write my laws on them and they will all know me to such a degree, they will all know me from the least of them to the greatest of them and no one will have to declare to another, ‘Know the Lord.’”

Now, this is absolutely beautiful and absolutely terrifying. Why? He says a person that is truly regenerate, that is truly a part of my people will know me. That doesn’t mean he will be a theologian. That doesn’t mean he will know all the great doctrines that are to be known, but it does mean that what they do know about God will be true in the vital essential things of redemption. They will know that their sins are forgiven, their iniquities remembered no more because of what God has done for them. There will be a true knowledge of God in their mind and in their heart, each and every one of them.

Now, there is this idea today that the reason why I talk so much about the remnant... There is this idea today, I hear it all the time and it goes something like this.

A preacher gets up and waxing prophetically and goes, “There is just as much pornography in the church as outside of the church. There is just as much adultery in the church as outside of the church. There is just as much lying and thieving and everything else in the church as outside of the church. There is just as much wickedness in the church as outside of the church.”

No, there is not. No, there is not. The problem is what you are calling the church is not the Church. People have this idea that everyone on Sunday in a brick building is the Church and then in that church there is a remnant of spiritual people. That is not true.

¹³ Jeremiah 31:33.

¹⁴ Jeremiah 31:34.

There is no remnant theology in the Church. The Church is the remnant. The Church are the true people of God.

I hear preachers sometimes, you know, calling, you know, the bride of Jesus Christ acts like a whore.

How dare you call the bride of Christ such a name?

Let me tell you something about the Church in America. She is beautiful. She is beautiful. She is broken. She is humble. She knows her sin. She knows her struggles, but she is trembling, she is broken and she is looking to Christ. The problem is what most people today are calling the Church is not the Church.

Josh McDowell made me so mad one time. He is standing up there and he goes, “75% of our Christian youth don’t think the resurrection of Christ is important.”

I am going, “Josh, if they don’t think the resurrection is important, they are not Christian youth. What is wrong with you?”

Or, you know, get some beloved deacon stands up in the middle of the church where men are tearing each other apart and goes, “Brothers, we are all Christians. We shouldn’t be hating one another.”

If you are hating one another, you are not Christians. Do you see the problem? You adapt to the name.

“Oh, I got the name. That is what I am.”

No. Prove. Make your election and calling sure. Bring forth fruit worthy of repentance.

“You shall know them by their fruits.”¹⁵

The Church of Jesus Christ is absolutely beautiful.

“Ok, well, brother Paul, you mean that people who are truly converted won’t struggle with some of these things?”

No, they may struggle with some of these things. But they will be broken and looking to Christ in these things.

But to think that the precious bride of Jesus Christ acts just like or worse, some preachers say, than the world, I would not want to stand before Christ on judgment day having said such a thing against his bride and against his power to save.

The Church is beautiful. It is just what we are calling the church is not the Church.

¹⁵ Matthew 7:16.

It is very important. Look at the new covenant promises here.

“They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they will all know Me.”¹⁶

That doesn’t mean that the New Testament Church doesn’t have teachers. Ephesians four tells us it does. But what it means is this. There will be a knowledge of God among God’s people.

I go up into the Andes Mountains, high up in the mountains and many of those men can barely read. No, they can’t quote all the great doctrines and things, but I want to tell you something. You throw some heresy across their table and they recognize it. They know Jesus is the only way. They know Christ is the only answer. They are trusting in him alone. They are turning from hopes and good works into salvation in Christ alone. I mean there is a knowledge of God that is absolutely astounding even though it is in its simplest form.

That is what happens when someone gets saved.

I will never forget one time I was preaching at a youth thing for First Baptist Church somewhere, no small city. And after I got done I felt pretty good about it and then I am called into the pastor’s office. I said, “What’s going on?”

He said, “Well, you have been accused of heresy.”

“I have been accused of heresy?” I am trying to think, ok, what did I do? All right, I am going, “What did I do?”

He says, “Well, you know, the young man who is over the youth department and everything he, you know, said that you were... I don’t know exactly what it is or anything. I haven’t heard, but we are going to have a council.”

And I said, “Ok.”

I am sitting there. The guy walks in. The pastor goes, “Ok. You know, what did brother Paul say?”

And he goes... he stood up and he goes, “Pastor, I love brother Paul, but brother Paul said that Jesus Christ was God in the flesh.”

The pastor goes, “Yeah?”

All right, this guy had gone all the way through. He was the leader of the youth group.

¹⁶ Jeremiah 31:34.

There is such rampant ignorance of God among those who profess to be a part of the Church, such lack of discernment among those who claim to be a part of the Church.

I was preaching in Tennessee a while back and a big discussion after I was preaching and I was wondering what is going on. All these girls and their moms were back there just going at it and they came towards me. That is always a scary sign. They came towards me and they said, "Brother Paul, we have got a question and we just can't figure out what the answer is."

I said, "Ok."

They said, "We have got a real debate going. Some of us think yes, some of us think no, but, you know, it is ok. I mean, it is ok, isn't it, for us to take our daughters and stuff to a Britney Spears concert?"

And I went, "I only have one response. The only thing I can think of saying to you right now is I would assume that most of you women are lost and without Christ because there is no way on the face of the earth a true Christian would even question such a thing."

You see? Just rampant...

Well, what is wrong with that?

Sometimes names need to be called. I get in so much trouble because I will call them.

Robert Schuler, people like that. They are arch heretics. They deny everything about the Christian faith. They are enemies of the cross. He denies all the major doctrines of Christianity.

Joel Olsteen denies all the major doctrines of Christianity. And yet people say, "Oh, I think he is so nice."

I wonder why they never say that about me.

You see, there is rampant lack of discernment, but God says that won't be the case among his true people. They will all be taught of God.

Ok, now I want to go on to one other passage in Jeremiah, chapter 32 verse 38. And here goes this reoccurring theme.

"They shall be My people, and I will be their God."¹⁷

This is what he is saying. Look, this maybe doesn't happen much here, but it happens a lot in Alabama. You go visit someone, knock on somebody's door go to their trailer or

¹⁷ Jeremiah 32:38.

whatever and they say, “Hey, you know, I just want to visit you. You haven’t been in church in 28 years and I just, you know, like to invite you back to church.”

“Come on in, pastor. Just come on in. Have a seat.”

Polite as they can be. And you look at them and you go... you begin to talk to them about the Lord and they go, “Pastor, just stop. You are right. You are just right. You are just right. I need to stop doing all this stuff. I just need to stop doing all this stuff. I need to stop going to all these honky tonks. I need to just stop drinking this beer. I need to stop watching NASCAR on Sunday. I need to stop doing all this stuff, pastor. You are right. And I need to come to church. I just need to do the right thing and get myself in church.”

You are looking at a lost man. Do you know why? Do you know what he is actually saying? Have a little discernment. This is what he is saying. “You are right, pastor. I need to stop doing all the wicked things I love and start doing all the righteous things I hate in order to go to heaven.” That is exactly what he is telling you which means his heart is not changed.

In the meetings I was in last week a lady had been in church for about 50 years was saved because her whole thing was morality. Another man was saved about three days into the meetings because he figured out his whole thing of Christianity was just doing the right thing no matter how much he hated it.

Christianity is not morality. It is a supernatural recreation of God whereby the heart is changed and therefore the commandments of God are no longer a burden, you see. They will be his people. He will be their God. It is what he has always... he will recreate their heart in such a fashion that for finally he has a family.

Now, he goes on and he says this. “And I will give them one heart and one way.”¹⁸ I love this. Oh, I love this. I could preach five hours on this, but I promise you I won’t.

Do you ever see these groups? They are out there. They are praying. You know, the body is so divided. The body of Jesus is so divided. We are just all so scattered. Why can’t we all be one, kumbaya and all these different things. Oh, the body is just so scattered. We need to pray that the body of Christ will be one.

No, we don’t. You see, some things that you take as a promise, you shouldn’t take as a promise. You should take as a reality. Jesus prayed that his people would be one. And I want you to know tonight they are. The people of God are one and they are not divided because if they are, then Jesus’ prayer failed which I just don’t think happened and in the new covenant promises it says they will be one. He says, “I will give them one heart.”¹⁹ He will.

¹⁸ Jeremiah 32:39.

¹⁹ Ibid.

Now let me explain this to me. That doesn't mean everyone has got pristine theology, but it does mean in the people of God. But it does mean this.

I want to tell you something. I can sit down beside a good old Baptist boy on a plane, begin to talk to him about the Lord and he will clam up and not want to hear anything I am talking about. But sometimes I can sit down with a Nazarene and begin to talk about the Lord and even though we would disagree on some major issues, that Nazarene gets so excited about Jesus Christ and begin to talk all the things that the Lord has done in their life and everything else.

When you come into contact with a true believer, another true believer, even though you may differ in some doctrines and if you do you should lovingly discuss them, but when you actually come into contact with another true believer, you will find your heart being one with them.

I will never forget. We were making our way. It was during the war and we were making our way up into the mountains of [?], well, no, in the mountains of [?] in [?] in Peru and we had to go literally we rode 22 hours in the back of grain truck covered in a black tarp on the equator. That is not a lot of fun. But it is great weight loss program.

And then at night when they reached [?] which means it used to be an old saw mill they pulled the tarp off and me and a Peruvian jumped out of the back and made our way into the jungle and we slept that night kind of on a concrete slab covered up and then we started up the mountain because we had to get to these believers who were very discouraged.

And so we are making our way up the mountain. It takes a long time. It takes a full day. And by nightfall we were pretty much lost. We didn't know where we were at. We knew that part of the mountain was controlled by terrorists. We knew that if they saw us we would be dead. And so we got down and we were just praying. "God, please give us some direction."

And all of the sudden I hear a bell and I hear a little boy's voice and he had a... it was a little boy with a burro and he was going back to a village called San Mateo. And so we just didn't have a choice. We said, "Let's just follow him."

Now, we didn't know once we got to the village. Is it controlled by the terrorists? Do the Communists own it? What is going on? If we walk in here are we going to die? But we had to get somewhere.

And so we walked into the village. It was pitch dark. I was kind of bent over like this trying to look really small and my friend Paco who traveled with me all the time he said, [?], "Are there brothers here?"

And some man went, "Ah, there is an old evangelical woman over there." She was a Nazarene. And we made it over there and I knocked on her door. And I will never forget.

She opened up the door just terrified. Didn't know if it would be terrorists or what it would be? And she opened up the door and had that lantern and she was [?]. And she looked up at me and I said, [?]. I said, "I am an evangelical pastor. I need your help."

She grabbed me, pulled me in there, pulled Paco in, ran us down into this basement that was carved out of the mud in the side of the cliff. She ran up the stairs. She got started. She sent out this one little boy to go get so and so and people started coming, gradually sneaking in and they were bringing chickens and cutting up yucca and everything else and preparing a meal and everything and then hid us there in the hay and we are one. We are one. The real people of God are one.

Now their doctrine might not always in some things, in the major things, yes, but in some things there might be some differences, but the love between them will cause them to risk their lives for one another, these silly people who don't know theology praying all these silly things that have already been done.

The problem is: So much of what is called Christianity is not Christianity.

He said, "I will give them one heart and one way."²⁰ And that will be a way of Christ. It will be a way of holiness.

I have sat down and I am not one of these persons that says that doctrine is just not important, we all ought to love Jesus. I think we all ought to love Jesus, but doctrine is important. But at the same time around this world I have fellowship with such people in dangerous circumstances and be one with them. When they come together in fellowship in the name of Jesus Christ, those truly have the Spirit of God, they are one and they are willing to risk their lives for the other one.

"One heart and one way."²¹

And he says this. "For their own good and for the good of their children after them."²²

Now I want to get to 40 and this is where we are going to end, 40 and 41.

He says, "I will make an everlasting covenant with them that I will not turn away from them, to do them good."²³

Now, listen. Look up real quick. One of the greatest things Southern Baptists is just tell half the story. You read that. God promises. "I will make an everlasting covenant with them that I will not turn away from them, to do them good."²⁴

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Jeremiah 32:40.

²⁴ Ibid.

“There you go, security of the believer. Once saved always saved. I prayed that prayer and now I live like hell and I am still going to glory.”

That is not what it means, because the same God who says, “I will make an everlasting covenant with them that I will not turn away from them, to do them good,”²⁵ and then look what he says. “And I will put the fear of Me in their hearts so that they will not turn away from Me.”²⁶

You have got all these people running around like wild dogs in the yard, claim to be Christians, no sense of God’s will, no care of being a part of his Church, of fellowshiping, of serving, of missions, of the Word, of growing in holiness, or anything, but bless God they are saved. And even if they live like hell they go, “Well, you know, he has made an everlasting covenant to never turn away.”

But what you need to understand, how do you know God has made an everlasting covenant with you to never turn away from you to do you good? You know it because he has put the fear of him in your heart so that you will not turn away from him. But if his fear is not in your heart keeping you in the right way then you need to be afraid whether or not he has really made a covenant with you.

Do you see what I am saying? You have got to get two sides of the story. But this is one of the most beautiful texts about assurance and security. He says, “I will make an everlasting covenant with this new people I am going to make and I will not turn away from them ever to do them good.”

Now we look at that as though we were like Israel. Ok, even though we are going to live like who knows what, pagans, he will never turn away from us to do us good. No. Because the second part says he puts the fear of God in each one of his children so that they do not turn away from him.

And then he says this, verse 41. “I will rejoice over them to do them good and will faithfully plant them in this land with all My heart and with all My soul.”²⁷

Now, to rejoice over someone, that is kind of bridle language. That is honeymoon language, a man rejoicing over his bride with the greatest immeasurable joy. And what he is saying is this, with such joy I will do my people good.

Do you know, some of my charismatic friends they always say, “You know, the greatest act of faith is to raise the dead. You raise the dead and you have got faith”?

And I say, “Ah, that’s nothing for a Baptist preacher. We do that every Sunday morning.”

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ezekiel 32:41.

You know what the greatest act of faith is? The greatest act of faith in my opinion is for me to look in the mirror of God's Word and see all my flaws and shortcomings and fears and to believe that he loves me as much as he says he does.

One of the things that believers do not do enough of and that is to keep themselves in the love of God as Jude commands. "Keep yourselves in the love of God."²⁸

You know, I am not a plant expert or anything, but if you say you are having trouble with your plants and I go to over your house and they are all in the closet, I am pretty much going to figure this one out. And what am I a going to say?

"You have got to keep that plant in the sunshine."

That is exactly what Jude is saying. "Keep yourselves in the love of God."²⁹ Keep a constant awareness of the love of God. Constantly believe the love of God.

I am one of the happiest people in the face of the earth. Just so you know, if anyone ever asks you who is the happiest person on the face of the earth you can just give them my name. I used to be one of the most miserable human beings and I am talking about before conversion.

I was raised in a family where if you scored 98 on an exam, why didn't you score 100 and get the four extra points on the bonus question? If you scored 22 points in the basketball game you could have scored 30 if you had just done this right.

When I was saved I imagined God to be that way and I was convinced that I was going to enter into God's inner circle and I was going to work harder than anyone has ever worked on the planet and I wasn't going to eat or drink water or smile or anything. I was going to be as spiritual as possible, intimidated absolutely everybody and worked 18 hours a day.

And the only thing I could reap from it was a full view of all my failure in devotion, service and everything.

And one day I collapsed on the third floor of a building in [?], in an old building we were using as a church and also to take care of street kids during the war. And I collapsed on the third floor, an abject failure in the ministry and a failure in my devotional life. And this was actually my prayer. "God, I don't want to go to hell because I am afraid of hell, but I don't want to go to heaven because I am ashamed. I am not Charles Spurgeon. I don't have the mind of Jonathan Edwards. I don't have the faith of George Mueller and I am not the missionary that your servant Hudson Taylor was. I guess I am just not getting in that inner circle."

²⁸ Jude 21.

²⁹ Ibid.

And that is when God began to work in my life. And I can almost tell you. I have almost no ambition in a certain sense. Oh, I want to be used of God and everything like that, but I have nothing to prove and I have nothing to gain. I am completely and perfectly loved by my God because of the finished work of Jesus Christ. And I hope you know how happy that can make a human being. I have nothing to prove. I mean, the first will be last and the last will be first.

Everything thinks, well, if I just take the last place here on heaven I will be first in heaven. No, when the first is last and the last is first there is no first or last. The humble hear it and are glad. The preachers who think they have accomplished something get very angry because they expect to get some kind of big reward up there.

The fact of the matter is he is our reward. The fact of the matter is all this hellish, damnable, sensual earthly pecking order that is on earth... you see, all of us, there are places we can't go. There are places where we are... none of us are in the inner circle. We can't even get through the door. We are not great. We are not going to be famous. None of those titles matter.

When you come into the kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, all that demonic stuff falls away. It is just him and we are just brothers, nothing to gain because we have gained everything already in him, nothing to lose because he is too strong. We are just loved and he rejoices over us to do us good. He rejoices over us to do us good.

If I had to think of one thing—and I don't want to sound too emotional here—but if I had to think of one thing that must pain the heart of God, it is the way that you don't believe how much he loves you. But it is hard, isn't it, because you can't find an example outside of God of how much God loves you. I mean, just no one loves like that. His love is unreal, almost to the point of being unrealistic. I mean how could he be this good? How could he be this kind? How could he be this merciful? He doesn't say, "I will do something for you because I made a covenant with you and I have to."

No, he says, "I will rejoice over you to do you good. It will fill me with glorious joy to do you good, my people."

Oh, you have not because you ask not.

He wants and desires to do so much more, to manifest so much more of your goodness to you than you could ever imagine. And that is one of the reasons why all of these winds come in and blow you away from all these trinkets that have no value. He is separating you for himself, but for your own good. It is an absolutely beautiful thing.

And he says this. Look at this. And I, "will faithfully plant them in this land with all My heart and with all My soul."³⁰

Nowhere in Scripture is that repeated.

³⁰ Ezekiel 32:41.

Now God is speaking as a man. He does not have a heart and he does not have a soul, but nowhere else is this language used. God said, "I will faithfully bring you to the place that I promised to bring you and I will do it with all my heart and all my soul."

And it is amazing. He never uses that statement in another place. He is going to finish the work in you. He is going to do it. That is absolutely spectacular. Cannot lose, can not, not be loved.

Israel, you have a great God.

An old country preacher friend of mine is absolutely brilliant. He has got the mind of Jonathan Edwards and he looks like Jerry Clower. He will sometimes start preaching about what God has done and he will back up and say, "Oh, folks, we got ourselves a God. We got ourselves a God."

How much he loves you.

You know, one of the most pitiful things about preaching and one of the greatest pains in the preacher's heart is that he knows he does not comprehend even the smallest matter of these things, but he knows even what he has comprehended he cannot communicate. Language fails.

That is one thing I love about Spurgeon. Very often in his six trillion sermons that I have had to read he is almost constantly saying language fails me here, language fails me here.

Do you read the book of Revelation? It is wild, isn't it? I don't understand anything about that book.

Well, anyways, but I do have an idea about apocalyptic language. You know, Ezekiel, he sees God and what does he see? A wheel within a wheel and all these different things and then you see John and here is this Christ with grey hair and flaming eyes and sword coming... I mean, it is just absolutely... it is amazing.

I don't think it is really like that.

You say, "Don't you believe the Bible?"

I believe every word of it is infallible, but I believe here is what is going on. When God reveals himself his beauty, his splendor, his holiness, his justice, everything about him is so beyond anything the mind can comprehend that it almost drives a normal man mad. His language is taken over by a mind that simply does not know where to go. And he speaks forth only what he knows to speak, but he knows it... he just can't grasp it all.

Like in the Song of Solomon when she is describing her beloved. He has a head of gold and black as a raven. Darling, that doesn't make a whole lot of sense.

But what is going on there is this? She is so raptured in his love, she is just literally about to run into a wall. Like my wife did the first time she saw me.

But what I want you to see is this. Just the beauty of your God toward you... Now, you can say one thing. You can say, "The beauty of God." It is very important someone surely ought to get their PhD writing a paper on that, the beauty of God. But then it is quite another thing to say the beauty of God toward you. The beauty of God toward you is so great that if he were to allow you to see the smallest glimpse of it, it would be so great it would drive you mad. Your mind would not be able to comprehend it, the beauty of him toward you, the greatness of his love toward you.

I believe that one of the reasons we will have to supernaturally be changed to be in glory will not simply be to avoid sin. That is quite a small thing, but we will need new receptacles to be even able to gaze upon his beauty toward us.

And what is amazing? Let me just let you in. None of you have probably been to heaven, so let me explain to you some things.

You get to heaven and you see God as you have never seen him before. And if you had not been supernaturally strengthened at that moment you would go mad, but you are strengthened and so you fall into a rapturous delight that goes beyond anything that tongue could ever tell. And then you go to bed. And then you get up in the morning and you walk out to the throne room of God and on the second day you see God in a way that eclipses everything you saw the day before. And if you were not further strengthened you would go mad, but you are strengthened and you are cast down before him with such delight and joy inexpressible, unspeakable. You go to bed. You wake up the next morning and this continues and now you really don't go to bed, ok? I am just putting this in a way you can understand it.

What I am trying to say is heaven is not going to be boring, not because we are perfect. Perfect people get bored. I have met some of them. Or at least they think they are perfect. Perfect people get bored. Gates of gold get boring. Gates of pearl, streets of gold, whatever, they get boring.

But glory is tracking down and chasing out God. And that is what you will be doing throughout all of eternity, knowing him and delighting in him.

And that is a pretty good future you have got there. You need to walk in that joy.

I preach a lot on holiness and things like that and people think I am really mean, but what you need to understand is this. What it really comes down to is cutting away all the baggage so that you can run with him, delight in him.

It is a wonderful, passionate thing.

Let's pray.

Father, I come before you, Lord, and rejoice in this fellowship and the seriousness of the thing preached and in the joy and in the laughter of something less than a little babe trying to communicate something he knows so little about. Father, help your people that they might see Christ and walk in joy unspeakable, filled with biblical visions of what you have done for them, what you are doing for them and the great plans that you have for them, that their joy, Lord, would push them forward and be their strength. And, oh, God, that their Christianity would surpass morality and turn into a dance following you in Jesus' name. Amen.