

The Mysterious Ways of God

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Turn now to the book of Isaiah chapter 55. I am going to read for a text verses six through verse 11. Isaiah 55 verses six through 11.

And the prophet says

“Seek ye the LORD while he may be found.”

He is not an experience that we seek. He is a person, not a doctrine that we seek. It is a person, the almighty, eternal, invisible God. Seek the Lord.

...call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way.”

Now that is not just talking about the person who lives in the gutter. That is not just talking about a person who is a drunkard or a murderer or a blasphemer or a bigot. That is talking about a religious man who has pursued his own way of righteousness which is wickedness. There is no greater wickedness than to seek to be found accepted of God by our own doing. The men who crucified the Lord were men who were seeking God by their own way, their way.

“Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts.”

What does he think about himself, about sin, about God, about Christ? See?

“...and let him return unto the LORD.”

To the Lord, to his way, his will, his righteousness.

“...and [God] will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly [multiply his pardon. For...”

Now see the “for?” When a sentence begin with a “for” you see what it is there for. F O R, for, he is going to be talking about what he has been talking about. He is going to explain what he has been talking about.

“Let the wicked forsake his way.”

His way, his way and his righteousness.

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD.”

And how far apart are his ways and our ways?

“For as the heavens are higher than the earth...”

That is pretty good... that is pretty good distance.

“As the heavens are higher than the earth...”

What you think is not what God thinks.

“There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.”

Man’s way is not God’s way.

“For as the heavens are higher than the earth,” so infinitely higher than the earth, “so are my ways higher than your ways.”

I don’t do things your way. Your thoughts are not my thoughts and your ways are not my ways. I don’t do things logically as men consider and purpose and plan and think God ought to do them.

“Thou thoughtest I was all together such a one as thyself,” he said.

“My thoughts than your thoughts.”

Now William Cowper wrote a hymn in 1774 that goes like this. “God moves in a mysterious way.” Our ways are not mysterious. Our ways are earthly and carnal, logical to us, natural. For he moves in a mysterious way his wonders to perform, not our wishes necessarily, nor our wills, but his wonders, his ways. He plants his footsteps on the sea and he rides upon the stars. Deep.

We are so shallow today. Our preachers are shallow. Our giddiness and foolishness and ignorance is so shallow. But deep in mysterious mines of never failing skill God treasures up his bright designs and he works his sovereign will.

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense, and how we do that. How we do that. How we limit God. But trust him for his grace. Behind a frowning providence, he hides a smiling face.

We need to be reminded again and again shall our God accomplish his divine purposes in regard to his glorious kingdom and his beloved Son and his eternal will for his sheep. God accomplishes his purposes and his ways and his will in his own way for his own glory. He brings it to pass when he will, for whom he will in the way that he will.

Now he said in Isaiah 40:6, "My counsel will stand."

"All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field," that fadeth. But God said, "My Word will stand forever. My counsel is going to stand."

He said, "I will do all my pleasure." That is God.

The God we hear about today is a God who wishes and wills and desires, but can't accomplish his desires or his will. We have tied the hands of God, they tell me. But the God of the Bible says, "I have spoken it. I will bring it to pass. None can stay my hand or say unto me what doest thou?" He said, "I have purposed it. I will do it."

He worketh all things after the counsel of his own will, the salvation of a sinner or the condemnation of one, the raising up of a Moses or the casting into the sea of a Pharaoh of whom he said, "I raised you up for this purpose. I raised you up for this purpose that I might show my power in thee."

Judas, son of perdition from the beginning. That is what the Word says. See, that is God.

Somebody says, "That is not my God."

That is what I have been saying. That is not your God. That is not the ways of men. That is not the thoughts of men. We have made us a God like Aaron made a calf. There is no one made the eternal God. Therefore he is in subjection and obligation to no man. He is and he was and he always will be. He said, "I am."

The one that comes along second is in subjection to the one who was here first. That's right.

He said, "I'll be merciful to whom I will be merciful."

Moses said, "Show me your glory."

God said, "All right. I will show you my glory. I will show you my goodness. I will be merciful to whom I will be merciful. I will be gracious to whom I will."

He said, "I dried up the sea." He said, "I turned the rivers into a wilderness. I hung a sack cloth over the sun and I made the brightness of day to be as the midnigh. Can I not save whom I will?"

Where is your God, David? Our God is in the heavens.

What is he like? He hath done whatsoever he pleased.

Nebuchadnezzar came back from the field and he said, "My sense is returned to me. My understanding returned to me. I had been insane. I boasted about my powers and my kingdom and my will and I found out that the most high God ruleth in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of this earth and giveth it to whomsoever he will."

God maketh rich and God maketh poor. God killeth and God maketh alive. God said, "I create good and I create evil. I create life and I create darkness. I the Lord do these things."

We have no power to create anything. We have no power to alter or change anything. We are the sheep of his pasture. We are the work of his hands and every soul in here tonight will glorify either his salvation and his mercy or his justice. But everybody is going to glorify God. Even the wrath of man will praise the Lord. Even your anger will praise the Lord. Even your rebellion will work his purpose.

When they crucified the Son of God he said, "You did what I determined before to be done." He was delivered according to the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of an all wise God who purposed and planned his sacrifice and to whom it was made and who when man planted him in the earth, God raised him and set him on a throne and says he will reign until every enemy is made his footstool and I will send him back to execute judgment. And I will judge the whole world by this man Jesus Christ whom I raised from the dead.

The living God will not conform to the patterns of men. The living God will not conform to the ways determined by men. They will set up what they think is a sabbath day and he will walk through a field and pick corn on it. They will tell a man he can't carry his bed on the sabbath day and he will tell him to pick it up and walk, a man that hadn't walked in 38 years.

They will tell him, "You must wash your hands before you eat."

He will eat without washing his hands.

They will tell him, "The Jews are your chosen people."

And he will save a woman of Canaan.

Years and years ago over in England there were two very solemn Christian gentlemen, reformed, Calvinist. And they had a friend who was spending a week with them before sailing for China. He was going to China to work for the government. He was going to be there for many, many years. They were troubled about him because he was not a believer. And they prayed for him and prayed for him and prayed for him. And they

thought, well, this week while he is visiting with us we will take him to hear some of the renowned, famous reformed brethren. There were a lot of them in that day. So they started on Monday night, Tuesday night, Wednesday night, Thursday night and took him to all of the different places where these men held forth.

He wasn't moved by any of them.

There was one preacher left of some fame, power, but he was an eccentric type preacher. His name was Rowland Hill. And they had saved him to till last because he was unpredictable and strange. Nobody know what he was going to say next. He didn't conform. He didn't fit the pattern. He didn't follow the ways prescribed by most of the reformed Calvinists. But he was the only one left. He was a humorous man, plain spoken man and they said occasionally a bit vulgar.

And they prayed as they started for church that night with their friend who was going to China.

Lord, help Mr. Hill to be sane and sensible tonight. Help him not to be too far out, too strange and plain.

Well, he preached at Surrey Chapel. And they sat down with their friend between them and I will tell you, Mr. Spurgeon said Surrey Chapel that night was nothing like they were accustomed to. The people sang and rejoiced and praised the Lord and Mr. Rowland Hill was plainer and stranger and more eccentric and humorous than ever and they were so embarrassed. And they left the chapel with their friends, their heads hanging low, too embarrassed to speak because Mr. Rowland Hill had disappointed them so much.

And as they walked down the street the friend broke the silence and they both looked at him. He had big tears running down his cheeks. And they said, "What is wrong?"

He said, "God spoke to me tonight."

That wasn't the way we planned it. How could God speak to you through Rowland Hill? He is supposed to speak to you through the reformed brethren who are so starched and solemn and serious. He is supposed to speak to you when we sing the psalms, not the hymns.

God won't work your way. He just won't do it. You get it all fixed up and say, "Now, here is the pattern, God. You can work now."

You go over here in the strangest way.

I heard another story one time years ago, a true story, a believer, a man up in years. He had children. Some of them were unbelievers. They didn't love his gospel. They didn't

love his God. His grandchildren were not saved. They didn't know God, had no interest in the gospel.

And he was so concerned for them, but to no avail. He prayed for them and he talked to them some, but they weren't interested. And he grew older and he knew he was going to die before too long and so he had it all planned in his mind. He had it all fixed up and this is what he thought. He thought, now when I come to die I will be lying on my bed and my children will be gathered about me. The doctor will tell them that the old man doesn't have much longer. They will come from far and near and they will gather around my bed. And as they stand around my bed I will give such a good witness and testimony. I will sing the old hymns that I used to sing. And I will quote Scripture and I will witness to them. And they will be impressed. And they will turn to the Lord.

But it didn't work out that way. This man who knew God and who loved God died with a brain tumor. And his last days were days so wracked with anguish and pain and suffering that he never sang anything. He forgot all the Scripture he ever knew. He only wept and tossed about on the bed and prayed to die. His death bed was a scene of great trouble.

You can't put God in a mold. God will not and being God cannot do things your way, because my way and your way is not his way.

The God of men's imaginations and that is generally the God that men preach in this day is the God of their imagination. Well, I will tell you what I think. Well, you can be sure that is wrong. The God of men's imagination works as they have designed and as they expected and as they have planned for him to work. They can get all their churches together. Some famous, well known, renowned evangelist with great credentials and influence and success in the past and organize all the choirs and organize all the counselors. Get a huge football stadium, have about 155 or 60 churches cooperating and bring all the people together and put their champion in the pulpit and their mighty preachers behind him and their great singers and organist and choir and they can say, "Now, God, now you can work."

But he never has. You read the revivals of the past. You read about the Welsh revival, the New England revival, the revival under Luther, any... that right, John? You have read those things. It doesn't work that way. You don't plan God's purpose. You don't plan God's ways. The living God will not operate in the frame work of the creature. He can't do it, John, not and be God. Our ways are not his ways. Our times are not his times. And until we submit to his ways and his thoughts and his times, you can forget it.

Oh, he will let us play church. We have been playing church for years. He let us go through the motions. He will let us play religion. He will let us do this and he will let us do that. Turn us loose to go our way. But he will work when he will. I tell you.

Now listen to me. I am talking about the God of the Bible. I am talking about the living God. I am not talking about the God of our imagination, the God of the Bible. Listen to

me. The God of the Bible would create a man in his own image and give him dominion and rulership over a whole world, give him a woman by his side and then permit them both to fall into sin, depravity and death and stand by while they fall.

You say, "God didn't know that was going to happen."

Then he ain't God. God didn't permit the fall. Then he is not God. Somebody else is. There is a power greater than the power. That is right. He permitted that man and woman to fall into sin in order to fulfill a purpose which he counseled in his eternal will before the world was ever built or the foundations laid to redeem a people and make them in the image of his Son. That is what he said.

Christ is the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world. There is an everlasting covenant that was made before that covenant was made with Adam. I don't know why God permitted the fall. I just know that he did. The last thing I need is a God I understand. The last thing I need is a God I can comprehend. That is the reason I challenge this world of preachers and religionists and tell them their God is not the God of the Bible because their God is a God they understand.

This God will leave Israel, his chosen people, in Egypt for 400 years, 400 years in slavery, back breaking slavery. He left them there for 400 years. And then allowed the very man whom he intends to use to deliver them to try to do it by himself and have to leave the whole country in disgrace, hated by both sides. That is right, Moses. Forty years old in the...

Now this is when we use men. This pastor is too old, but that one is too young. So we will get one, I would say about 40, in the prime of life with the credentials. Now God will use him.

No, he won't. Moses was 40 years of age. He was second in command in Egypt. He had all the riches and treasures behind him. He was a son of Pharaoh's daughter. That is the logical one to lead Israel out of Egypt.

No, sir. God humiliated him in that character. He even turned Israel against him. They said, "Who made you the judge over us?"

The Egyptians were down on him and the Israelites were down on him and he left Egypt broke, penniless with a shepherd's staff and God put him on the backside of a desert for 40 years and let him sit there and watch a bunch of mangy sheep till he was 80 years old. We would have retired him then. Who wants a pastor 80 years old? Send a man 80 years old to lead two million people out of Egypt? He can't do it.

Exactly. He can't. And he had to find that out.

When you can't do it, God can. And that is when God will do it for you, when you can't do it.

Almighty God will leave Abraham childless until he is almost 100 years old. This is the man he took out one day and showed him the sky and said, "Count the stars."

He said, "I can't count the stars. There are millions of them."

He said, "So shall your seed be."

"I don't have a son."

And then God will resist any efforts on the part of Abraham to get one. This is the God of the Bible.

I don't understand God.

I know you don't. Good thing you don't. That shows you are creeping up on some understanding of who he really is.

Almighty God would take Joseph into Egypt. How would he do it? Certainly not our way. He takes him into Egypt by way of a pit with all his brothers turned against him. He took him down into Egypt as a slave and old Joseph worked his way up. He worked his way up through integrity and honesty and hard work. He worked his way up until he was a chief steward in Potiphar's house.

Now we almost got him on the throne. All we have got to do is get him elected. But that is not God's way. So Potiphar's wife got interested in him. He turned her down and they threw him in prison.

Now we are right back where we started from. We never will get Joseph on the throne. Now he is in jail. Now he is humiliated. Now he has been accused of raping his boss' wife. That ain't a candidate for the throne, not your candidate, but that is God's candidate.

Do you see what I am saying? God put him on the throne.

I could spend the night talking about things like this. Almighty God will allow Satan personally to buffet Job and break him and bruise him and crush him and turn his life into mourning and everybody against him to accomplish his purpose. And then God will turn his mourning into joy.

Weeping endures for the night, but joy comes in the morning, God's joy, God's joy. But you have got to go through God's night to enjoy God's joy. That is not our way. We don't want to see anybody cry. We don't want to see anybody suffer. We don't want to see anybody in trouble. But you don't wear the crown until you have walked the way of the cross, even the master.

God will pass by the pride of Jesse's household and go out there on the side of the hill and choose his king, a lad that everybody else thought couldn't possibly be God's choice.

"My ways are not your ways saith the Lord. My thoughts are not your thoughts. As the heavens are high above the earth, so my way is higher than your way."

God will make Judas an apostle, elect him treasurer of the Church, give him all the funds to carry in a bag and then allow his greed to be his downfall.

God will allow Satan to sift the chief apostle, Peter, the spokesman of the whole group, allow Satan to try him and sift him and even let him sit by a fire and warm his hands and deny his Lord and then make him the greatest preacher of his day.

God sent him to a seminary all right. God sent him to a seminary.

God will lead Saul of Tarsus in false religion even leading him to consent to the death of gallant men and wait until he is over 40 years of age and then call him to be his Savior. Then let him preach 11 or 12 years and let his enemies kill him. Let his enemies kill him. Let Paul cry from a prison cell, "All men have forsaken me. Only Luke is with me. At my first trial nobody stood with me. Even some of my preacher brethren seek to add to my bonds."

Think about that. They let him be martyred.

God will allow Paul and Barnabas and John Mark to fall out and fuss and go their separate ways to accomplish his glory.

Turn to Romans chapter 11. When you think you have got her all figured out, read this Scripture. Read this Scripture. When you get the religion all in line, feel like you have got it all fixed up, God talks to you and you talk to God and you get that little sentimental emotionalism going pretty strong, just pick up Romans 11:33 and read, "Oh the depths of the riches, both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God. How unsearchable are his judgments and his ways past finding out. Oh, who hath known the mind of the Lord."

Have you? This Lord I am talking about. You know the mind of the Lord?

"Who hath been his counselor? Or who hath first given to him?"

Have you given anything to God? I gave him my heart. Did you? Or did he give you a new heart?

Who hath first given to him and it shall be recompensed to him again? Did God drive a bargain with you? Are you exchanging things with God? Are you giving God a dime or two and he is blessing you for it? Is that the God you are talking about?

Why it says here, “For of him and through him and to him are all things.” He said, “If I was hungry, I wouldn’t ask you.”

To whom be glory forever and ever.

But, preacher, what do you think is going on today?

Well, I tell you this. Seems to me that God’s preachers today, those who speak for God... Now God never left himself without a witness. God never left himself without a witness. Somebody today is speaking the truth. Somebody today is preaching the gospel. Somebody today is God’s messenger or plural messengers. And I do know that his messengers have always been ordinary men.

Now you go through the Word. Ordinary men. He didn’t find them loafing. He found them all occupied. They are men of clay like the apostles of old. They are weak vessels. They are men. And they are conscious and remain so of their inability and of their weaknesses and of their constant need of his grace and of his power. They are not professionals. They never are. They are not recognized. They never are. They are not lauded by the world. They never are. They do not have the credentials recognized by the world and meeting the standards of the world. They never did. You can’t find one. He finds them by the seashore. He finds them among the sheep as a shepherd. He finds them here. He finds them there. They are the least of all the saints. They are the chief of sinners. But they are men who have sincere and serious minded and dedicated to one task and that is to preach Christ.

Turn to 2 Corinthians chapter two. They are not out to build a name except his name, but certainly not a name for themselves. In 2 Corinthians chapter two verse 17 the apostle Paul says, “We are not as many and the false prophets are always many. Many false prophets are gone out into the world, many deceivers,” Peter says. “But we are not as many. We are not as the many which corrupt the Word of God, deal deceitfully with the Word of God, use the Word of God and religion to accomplish their purposes. And that is what the TV rich evangelist con men are doing. They are using the Word of God to accomplish their own goals and purposes. That is exactly right.

They offend no one. They find something that everybody is against and they major on it. They are not preaching the character of God and the glory of God and the sinfulness of men and the effectual, substitutionary work of Christ and the glory of Christ and the need of redemption and how God can be just and justifier. They are dealing with issues, civil issues, political issues, social issues. They are not dealing with spiritual issues.

If men get right in their hearts, they will get straightened out on the outside. But these men of God they do not corrupt the Word of God, but as of sincerity, sincerity, as of God, sent of God with the glory of God as their objective, obsessed with the glory of God in the sight of God, not in the sight of men. They are not trying to please men or win their friendship or win their support.

Paul said, "If I please men I am not God's servant."

And they speak of Christ. They preach Christ, Christ, Christ Jesus the Lord, who he is, what he did, why he did it, where he is now, his glory, his gospel, his kingdom, his sacrifice, his deity, his resurrection, his intercessing. They preach Christ. They don't just preach about him. They preach him. They identify him. They glorify him. God's preachers are preachers of Christ. They are not promoters. They are prophets. They are not entertainers. They are prophets. They are disturbers of Israel. They don't sooth the flesh. They trouble it. They comfort the hearts. And the comfort is not in their words, but in his.

There is a difference. Woe be unto the person that can't recognize it.

Well, who are God's people? That is God's preachers. They are unique, unusual. They are men who play a one string fiddle and that is Christ. They are men who tell the same story over and over and over again and never get weary of it. They are men who identify with the people. They are among the people. They are of the people. But they are servants of Christ.

Who are God's people? Well, God's people today, as I see it, I am watching these things take place. God's people are being called out and most of them are being called out of religion because everybody is in religion. Everybody in America is in some kind of religion. Everybody in America has got some kind of denominational preference, some kind of religious background, some kind of heritage or ancestry or some kind of claim on God. You know that and I know that. And if God when God finds his people he finds them in religion most of the time now.

In every denomination look around about you in this congregation. I can look out here and I can see people who were raised Catholics, Mormons, Church of Christ, Nazarene, Pentecostal, Carmelite, Southern Baptist, Primitive Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterians and nothings. That's right. Some are old, some young, some rich, some poor, some educated, some not so educated, some straight laced and some sensual, some married, some single, some divorced, some strong, some weak, but all foolish things of the world.

Turn to 1 Corinthians one. Now I will read you a name. If you are one of his own, if you have been called out I will read your name. And you will recognize it.

He said in 1 Corinthians 1:26, "You see your calling, brethren, brethren, brethren, your calling. Who called you? God called you. How that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called. But God hath chosen. You didn't chose him. He chose you. He chose you in Christ, too. He chose you in Christ before the world began, he said. And he chose you to salvation. And he hath chosen... whom hath he chosen? The foolish. But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the smart alecks and the wise, folks that got all the answers. And God hath chosen the weak things, weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty and the base things."

This is not our way. If you want to reach Ashton with the gospel you have got to go over here and get some famous football player and bring him to town so that the young people will listen to him. He will lead them down the path of destruction.

Well, if you will get all the preachers in town and the business men and the mayor and the city counsel and we will all go together and we will all sit on the platform and we will show them all we are for Jesus and that will influence people.

That is not what God says. That is your way. It will just influence them to go right on down that same old road of dead religion that they have been walking all the time.

God has chosen the weak things, the despised, the things that are not to confound the things which are mighty.

Watch verse 28.

“And the base things of this world and the things which are despised.”

Well, who is he? Well, he is from Nazareth. Nazareth? Nazareth? Can any good thing come out of Nazareth? I am not going to hear him.

No I figured you wouldn't.

The things which are despised hath God chosen.

I had a meeting out in Texas a few years ago and a preacher came to me and said, “What are you doing tomorrow for breakfast?”

I said, “Not anything.”

He said, “Do you want to have breakfast with me and a young preacher?”

I said, “I guess so.”

He said, “He wants to pick your brain.”

[?]

I said, “Well, all right.”

So we went to breakfast and we exchanged the common courtesies. We sat down. We ordered, you know. We were drinking coffee. And he looked over at me and he said, “Which seminary did you graduate from?”

I said, “None.”

He never asked me another question, not another question. I didn't have anything he wanted to hear.

That is our way. That is when we lost God. That is when this generation lost God when they became... when they became enamored with and influenced by the high and mighty and the credentials of men. You know, you can't get to be pastor of the average church unless you go through the required so forth and so on. It doesn't matter if you know God.

Oh, my, my, my, hath God chosen the things which are not, which are not. Mr. Nothing from no... Mr. Nobody from nowhere hath God chosen to bring to naught the things that are.

Why? Watch verse 29.

“That no flesh, no flesh, no flesh should glory in his presence.”

And I promise you. No flesh is going to. But I will tell you. I did this and I did... I am somebody. I mean the church would be fortunate to get me. It would be blessed when you leave.

If I can help you, you will hurt us. That is right.

“But of him, of God, totally of God are you in Christ Jesus who of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption.”

All of God's people have one, they have one identity. They are like the woman with the issue of blood whose life was draining out of her and she wasted all that she had on all this quakery and nothing called religion in the world. And she said, “Oh, if I could just get to him. I got... I have one... I have one hope. I have one hope. If I can just get to him and touch him.”

And that is your one hope. That is my one hope.

If I can swim through this sea of confusion, if I can be delivered from this perverse, wicked generation, if I can be delivered from this people who think they have got God in a box, if I can close my ears and never hear them say another word and if I can just get to Christ and hear him authorize and anointed and ordained of the Father to speak for God.

“God who at sundry times and in diverse manners spake to our fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken to us by his Son.”

If I can get to Christ.

I don't want to hear somebody talking about him. I want to hear him talk.

Paul said in Philippians three. "Oh, that I may win Christ and be found in him, that I may know him and the power of his resurrection. I count all these things, my accomplishments, my heritage, my ancestry, my religion, my professions, I count all my righteousness but dung, but rubbish, but loss that I may win Christ and be found in him."

A thousand times better not to come into this world than to leave it without Christ.

And, thirdly, there is a four fold struggle going on in everybody whom God saves. I know there are a lot of people walking the aisle. They have got their little ritual. They have got their little altar call. They have got their little superstitious way of fixing people up for heaven. They have all the singing and then the preacher gets up and rants and raves and talks about politics and abortion and pornography and all these things. And he says Jesus two or three times. Now he says, "Every head bowed and every eye closed. You want to go to heaven when you die? Raise your hand. Amen. God bless you. Come on down here and shake my hand. Pray the sinners prayer."

They come down. Thousands of them. You are saved. I will send you a book how to get straightened out and send us a little money and we will build another building and we are all fixed up.

But I know this. God is saving some people. And every one of them I meet there is a struggle, a four fold struggle. Now you can write this down. This is so. There is a four fold struggle. And this war is going to be fought and won by the King. He is going to conquer you. . If he saves you, you are one wild ass' cold he is going to break. That is exactly right. He is going to break you. If the King rides you, he is going to break you. He is going to hold the reign and you are going to go his way.

And there is a four fold struggle and I will tell you what it is. Number one, it is his righteousness or mine. That is going to be [?]. His righteousness or mine. This is going to be settled once and for all. It is not easy, because the natural man is a proud man and he thinks he is good. He thinks he is... there is somebody that he is better than. That is right. He is a proud man. We can't face this. We all do fade as the leaf. Our comeliness and beauty is faded and even our righteousnesses are filthy rags. We can't face that. That is too hard to face. The only way in the world a man will ever buy that or believe that is to have a regenerated heart.

So-called good people are being saved. That is right.

I went down to Louisiana to preach in a meeting, a school teacher there played the piano. She was the finest lady in the community, the finest lady in the church everybody thought. I preached down there with another preacher for three or four days and last night of the meeting we stood to sing the last song. She came down the aisle weeping and she said, "The Lord has saved me this week. He has revealed to me my sin and my guilt and my evil and my wickedness."

And the church just... they couldn't understand that. They couldn't understand this.

But do you know what? She fought that battle during that week over his righteousness or mine. The righteousness of Christ clothing me, my filth, my guilt, my shame, my wickedness in the sight of God.

I am not talking about your sight. I am talking about his sight.

You say, "I am as good as you are."

I am sure you are. But one lump of coal is just the same color as the other. That is like one lump of coal says, "I am as white as you are."

You sure are. Exactly. One murderer is just as guilty as the other and one is just as innocent as the other when you compare them.

He said, "You are not smart to compare yourself with yourselves." That is what Paul said. "You are not very smart."

What you want to do is see yourself in the light of God's holiness and that is a different story. Then you will cry "unclean, unclean, unclean." His righteousness.

Here is the second battle is this. His regeneration. Do you know what regeneration is? It is a new creation. It is a new birth. It is creating life where there was no life. It is a new man created in Christ Jesus. That is regeneration. Now here is what we are fighting. His regeneration or my religious decision. Everywhere I go I run into people who say, "Well, I was saved back when I was nine or 10 years old and I walked down the aisle and made a profession. Now I have gotten away from the Lord and I haven't been to church like I ought to and I haven't lived like I ought to and I haven't had much interest in the Word, but I was saved back then. Don't you tell me I wasn't saved back then. I am serious. God did something."

And they hold on to that old profession like a bulldog holds on to a bone. And that is all it is is a bone. There ain't no meat on it. And they won't give it up. But I will tell you this. If you ever find out what salvation is you will give it up. If you ever find out salvation is not a decision, it is a new birth. Salvation is not an act of your will. It is an act of God's will. Salvation is not when you opened your eyes it is when God opens your eyes. Salvation is not when you saw the preacher, it is when you saw the Lord in his glory. Salvation is not when you saw it was wrong to take drugs or drink liquor or do this that and the other. When you saw that you were a sinner in the sight of a holy God and he was just and righteous in damning you. That is when it took place. When you came under new management, not when you made your decision. It is when he accepted you in the beloved, not when you condescended to accept Jesus.

Going to have to give it up.

I was preaching over in North Carolina. You talk about a blessing. I was preaching over there with Bill Sasser in a meeting three or four or five years ago staying in the pastor's home and I noticed his wife is one of my dearest friends now, but I noticed then that there was something wrong. I didn't know what it was, but I just felt uncomfortable. And one morning we got up and we were having some coffee and she was gone. She had taken the car and left. She went somewhere. If found out later where she went riding around. [?] walking along. Here comes that car around the bend and into the church parking lot. She got out of the car, smiled from ear to ear, tears of joy on her face and ran up and grabbed us and hugged us and said, "It is settled now. God has saved me. I see Christ."

She had been under conviction. She had had an old decision. See, she is another one of those folks that grew up in a religious home and made a profession of faith, went to the Baptist Church and the Sunday school and the BTU on Wednesday night. Good girl, married a preacher. And then God saved her.

You can't hold on to an old experience that stays old. Now you just keep on holding onto it now. You just keep holding on to it. You just keep holding on. If you have got to go back two days to prove you are saved, something is wrong.

I don't carry a birth certificate around to prove I am living. Just pinch me. I feel it.

Well, when did the Lord save you? It doesn't matter when. The fact that he did is it. I am not asking you... I forget when. Paul didn't say, "I know when I believed." He said, "I know whom."

And old John Newton said, "If I hadn't loved you before, let me start right now." That is the place you had better come to.

Salvation is a person. Salvation is regeneration. Salvation is a new creature. Don't you sit there in your religiosity and piety and look back on an old decision that you made 30 years ago and call it salvation. You see, repentance is a state. It is not an isolated act. Faith is a state of being. I have believed. I am believing. I will believe or I never believed, right?

I am in Christ. I have been in Christ and I will be in Christ or I never was in Christ.

If you can quit, you never knew him. That is right. This salvation is a growth. Anything that is living is growing. This thing is not growing.

You say, "Are you growing?"

You are growing bald.

Yeah, I am changing every seven years somebody told me, growing new cells, that is right. That is right, growing.

All right, thirdly. Here is the next thing. Watch it now. Here is a struggle going on in those whom God saves, an experience of grace, an experience of grace. Love what you read.

And this is not a sentimental hogwash love. This is a genuine love for God and truth and Christ and the blood and the people of God. The experience of grace, the life of Grace or the doctrines of grace. Now which one you got?

How many people learn Calvinism who never learn Christ? I have had some dealings with them. And they haven't been pleasant. How many people learn the ways of God who never knew the will of God?

Psalm 103 said, "To Israel he revealed his judgment, to Moses his will and his way."

How many people have a full head and an empty heart? What is it, grace in the letter or grace in truth? What is it, grace in letter or grace in experience? See what I am talking about?

The reality of Christ, the peace of Christ, the rest of Christ, the joy of Christ. If you don't have that joy, peace and rest from the person of Christ you will quit sooner or later, maybe later. But you will quit.

Now watch him. You will quit, because the hardest thing in the world is to live what we call a Christian life without Christ. You will quit.

I was out in Oregon in a meeting, preached every night, Sunday morning over in this pastor's church. Came back home and he called me on the phone. He said, "Brother Henry," he said, "the Lord has saved my soul." He said, "I have been preaching 15 years," and he said, "I had a head full of knowledge and doctrine. I studied the Scriptures, been to college and Bible school." But he said, "Even when I was in Bible school I used to tell my professors there is something missing in my life."

And they would say, "Oh, no, no, no. You believe Jesus died on the cross, buried and rose again?"

Yes, sir.

Well, you are saved. You just need to work for the Lord. Get busy for Jesus. Get out there and serve the Lord. Win souls. That is all you need to do. Old Satan is putting doubts in your mind.

All the doubts aren't Satan inspired.

And he said, "The Lord has..." He said, "All the time you was preaching I was sitting there thinking, I don't know that Christ he is preaching. I don't know that Christ. I know about him, but I don't know him."

And he said, "I want you to know God saved me."

And I said, "What are you going to do?"

He said, "I am going to tell the church in the morning."

I called him back on Tuesday or Wednesday. I forgot which. I said, "What happened?"

He said, "They fired me."

Can't afford to have a saved pastor. We listened to him when he didn't know God. That is right. The mechanics of religion. You can succeed in religion a lot faster if you don't know God. That is exactly right. You can... I know what I am talking about. Before I ever learned the gospel, I was a preacher and moving up mighty fast, involved in some of the biggest religious goings on.

One time the president of the college where I was going recommended me to go to England with [?] and have charge of all his music and song leader. I didn't even know the gospel, but I didn't know I didn't know the gospel.

Some of the most successful religious leaders of this day don't any more know the gospel. That is right. They don't ever preach it. They never preach it.

And that is what I am talking about. You can know the doctrines of religion and you can be successful in religion without having the experience of grace and know Christ.

And the fourth struggle and I will quit, here is the final battle. Here is where God's sword pierces your heart and kills you, slain, the slain of the Lord and that is his lordship, his lordship in my life or my ambition. Can't have both. No man can serve two masters. Isn't that right? He is going to be Lord. I mean, he is going to be Lord of all or he is not going to be Lord at all.

This is the final battle. That is what he slew Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus. Here was this proud, haughty, arrogant, successful, religionist riding a white horse, followed by a whole band of men, the talk of the religious world, the toast of the town, much learning, sat at the feet of Gamaliel and almighty God unhorsed him and put him in the dust.

As Scott said, "Made his head quarters in the dust."

And he looked up and said, "Lord, what will you have me do?"

Asked the Lord, "What will you have me to do?"

Whatever it is, you are my Lord.