

Sermon at Barbara Washer's (Paul's Mother) Funeral Service

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By Paul Washer

Bible Text: Romans 1:21; John 14:6

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My mother specifically asked me to share the gospel. The greatest way that you could honor her would be to listen for the gospel. Before I do, I would just like to say that I am so... I stand in awe, literally, of my sister and also her husband, Joe Chambers, and the service that they have given my mother over the last not just two years, but several years. My sister Heidi was such a daughter. And when she went home to be with the Lord, Erica and her family, her entire family took up the baton.

I have spent most of my life in jungles in Africa and South America and everywhere, but if I had to point to someone who as an example, it would be my sister and her family for the way they have served my mother. And it just ... there is just no words that could be spoken.

My mother ... there is so much that she wanted to say. Many of you who are relatives know how she tried to say so many things. I want to read a text that is not going to seem apropos. It is not going to seem like it fits, but this is what she wanted.

In the book of Romans it says:

“For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations.”¹

I know that doesn't fit the sermon, but I want you to think about something. Many, many years ago a famous Oxford don, an English scholar by the name of C. S. Lewis, he wrote a series of book called *The Chronicles of Narnia*. And in them, one of the volumes was the silver chair. And in the silver chair there was a prince, a young prince who had been captured as a child and taken away to something of a dungeon underground where he was kept under the power of a wicked witch.

Now all throughout the 24 hours of the day he would be a pleasant fellow because he was entertained by absolutely every delicacy and every form of entertainment possible. He had all the food, the finest food, the finest clothing, the finest furniture, all sorts of things

¹ Romans 1:321.

so that he became such a vain and trite individual. But right before midnight every night they would take him, the slaves of this witch, and they would tie him in a silver chair because for about five minutes he would go mad, absolutely out of his mind insane, screaming out. "My life is vanity. I am a prisoner. Someone save me." But after those few minutes would pass, then he was back to normal again.

Now I said this same thing years ago when my sister passed away. What am I trying to communicate? Well, the same thing C. S. Lewis was trying to communicate. We live in a world not like the third world. We live in a world where if you are an American you are richer than 95 percent of the world. You think about delicacies and clothing and entertainment and fun and this and that. But every once in a while five minutes sometimes, only five minutes in a life time, something happens. You get the reality of what is really going on. And the reality of what is really going on is man is a fallen creature.

Death is not natural. From a theological point of view you must understand death is not natural. It is supernatural. It was never intended to be a part of this world. It occurs because of sin and the judgment of God upon sin. All men die because all men sin. And when there is a funeral like this, every once in a while people wake up for just a few seconds and think what is really going on here, what is really true, what am I really supposed to be living for.

Do you know? It is sad. Even in moments like this most people never wake up.

Let me give you an example. How many people would come up and say, "Well, your mother is no longer suffering. Your mother is resting now. Your mother has gone to a better place"? And I always want to ask them: How do you know? Where did you hear that? Who told you? Did you read that on the back of a greeting card somewhere?

You see, none of that means anything unless it is really true. Is that true? Has she really gone somewhere? Or has she just gone? Has she gone up or down or sideways? Who is right? Who is wrong? What is this life and this world really all about?

One person in the midst of all of the philosophies, in the midst of all of the things that have ever been said whether in the western or the eastern world, one person stands up and says, "I am the way, the truth and the life and no one comes to the Father except through me."

Someone said last night they said, "Well, your mother is in a better place now because she was a good woman."

I said, "No. My mother is in a better place, but it is not because she was a good woman, because Scripture declares there are none good, no not one. There is none righteous, no not one."

If my mother is anywhere, it is because of the finished perfect work of Jesus Christ on

that tree, not because of her own righteousness, not because of her how she acted as a mother or a wife or a sister or a friend. It is because of what Jesus Christ did. And one of the things that is very common when we come in contact with things so conflicted and troubling as a death is we patronize. Patronize is when we say something, but it is really not to be taken seriously. One of the worst things you can do to someone is to patronize them.

I will give you an example. I was speaking several years ago. A university student came forward with a question. He said, "You know, I think what you are doing is great if it is right for you."

And I said, "No. According to the apostle Paul if what I am doing is not the truth, it is not ok even if it is right for me. As a matter of fact, if what I am doing following this dead Jewish Messiah, if he is not truly resurrected from the dead and the Son of God, I have wasted my entire life in the jungles of South America."

You see, what you have to come to grips with is something, again, I want to go back to C. S. Lewis. You have to come to grips with this. It is called the trilemma. Jesus Christ said he was God in the flesh. Now there are only three logical possibilities here. One, he is a lunatic, an absolute lunatic, because anyone who thinks they are God, who sincerely believes they are God and they are not, they are a lunatic. Or, he is a liar, the worst sort of liar because more people have been deceived by this one man Jesus Christ than all the other deceivers in the history of mankind. So he is either a mad man with the grey matter of something of a poached egg. He is either a mad man or he is a filthy, degenerate liar or he really is the Son of God.

Now, Lord, lunatic or liar. But now here comes the other part. I was sitting down one time in something of a debate in a Peru and this one student said, "Well, I believe in God. My brother here is an Atheist, but I believe in God."

And I said, "Well, I have more respect for your atheistic brother than I do you."

And he said, "Well, why?"

And I said, "Well, he says he is an Atheist and he lives like one. You say you believe in God and yet it has no impact or influence upon your life."

You see, so looking at you if you out and out reject Jesus Christ as an absolute lunatic and you live not under his commands, at least you are consistent. If you think he is a liar and ignore his teaching you have nothing to do with the Word of God. You are consistent. But if there is an inkling in your mind that he is the Son of God and yet has nothing to do with your life, that is absolute insanity. The only one who has the truth.

Now notice what he said. He said, "I am the way, I am the truth and I am the life." One of the things Christianity among the Greek fathers was called was scandalon, which means the scandal. Christianity was considered a scandal. And the scandal of Christianity

is this. It is exclusive. Jesus doesn't stand up and say, "I am a way, a truth and a life." He uses the definite article. I am the way, the truth and the life. He speaks exclusively of every other thing. That is why early Christians died in the Roman Empire because they were considered Atheist, because they said all the other gods were not true. There is just one true God and it is Jesus Christ.

Now he says he is the truth, not a truth, but the truth, the source of all truth. Now if you deny that and live as though he is not the truth, well, then you are consistent. But if you would say, "Yes, I believe Jesus Christ is the truth," but that truth has no impact on your life, that is greatly inconsistent. That is not logical. It is devastatingly irregular. He said he is the truth. So the only thing someone who believed that could do would be able to seek him to say, "He is the truth."

But he also said that he was the way. You see, in South America where I lived for so many years everybody believes they are a Christian because one time in their life they were baptized as an infant and they go to church for mass once a month or once a year. And we say that is absolutely preposterous. The same thing is done here in America. People believe that they are Christian because one time in their life they prayed a little prayer and they asked Jesus Christ to come into their life. But he is not just a truth where you say, "I believe he is the Son of God. I believe he died for our sins. I believe he rose again from the dead."

James said the devil believes that and also trembles. But he is also a way. That that faith that the is the Son of God and he died for your sins and he is the only way to heaven, that faith molds your life. It creates the way for the rest of your life to walk in. And then not only is he truth and not only is he a way to walk in, but he is life.

You hear people today all the time say, "Well, I received Jesus." That is not what any of that means. To receive Christ, Jesus explained it quite clearly one time and he said it in a way that was so offensive to everyone. It caused everyone to actually turn away from him. Jesus said this, "Unless you eat my flesh and drink my blood, you have no part with me." Everyone turned away from him when he said it and he knew they would. But he said it anyway. What was he teaching? To receive Jesus is not just a little creedal statement that you believe in. He is saying to receive him is he becomes the very sustenance and source of your life. He is not some little accessory like a belt or a buckle on a shoe.

There are preachers today that say you have a wonderful life. You have got a great career. You have got beautiful kids. Everything is wonderful. You just lack one little thing. You need Jesus.

That is blasphemy. Jesus would say it this way. You have nothing if you have not me. You have nothing.

He is not a part of our life. He is not an accessory to our life. He is our life. Feed from him.

Now something very important. And my mom really wanted this said. My mom was many things than brother Jack said, but all of you who knew my mom knew this. My mom was a sinner. My mom broke God's law at times. There were times my mom was capable of exceeding kindness. There were times my mom could be down right rude. She wanted this said, so don't be mad at me. There were times when you would have thought, my goodness. She really is something. And then there were times you would have thought, my goodness, that woman is really something.

I am attacking any idea because she wanted it this way and because it is true. I am attacking any idea that my mom is in heaven today because she was good. Because the Bible says there is none good, no not one. One of the greatest preachers who ever lived, Charles Spurgeon says, "I did enough sinning between getting up in the morning and getting down to breakfast to damn a thousand souls to hell."

My mom is in heaven because the work of Jesus Christ is absolutely perfect. It is not about her. The Bible says to her, "All your good works, even the best, most altruistic, most moral things you do before a holy and righteous God are like filthy rags."

Here is the key. There were times what most convinced me that my mother was Christian was there were times when mom would do things and she would come and she would be weeping and say, "I... my tongue is just evil. What I said, what I did, the way I acted today, it was rotten. It was wrong. I have got to apologize. Lord, forgive me. Please help me. I need grace. I want to be what you want me to be. I fail all the time. Oh, if it were not for the power of the blood of Jesus Christ I would have absolutely no hope at all."

If you have any other attitude about yourself, you are not Christian. If you think you are going to heaven because you are good or are religious or have a ministry or have done things, you are wrong. The old hymn writer said, "Nothing in my hands I bring, simply to the cross of Christ I cling." Morality will not save you. Church will not save you. Religion will not save you. Being Baptist, evangelical, Catholic, Pentecostal or anything else will not save you. But trust in Christ, a trust created because by the Spirit of God, God has shown you the sin in your life, the absolute utter destitution of righteousness. God has opened a lid and shown you that if he were to judge you according to your deeds you would be like all others. All have fallen short of the glory of God. And you have seen to that to such extent that you have thrown away every hope in yourself and every other thing and trusted only in Christ. Christ alone.

So many times she would talk on the phone and when she would witness to people sometimes I will never forget this Terminex man came to the house and mom ... I was listening to mom witness to him. She was just tearing him up. And when she got done she came back in the house and she said, "Well, he knows where he is going."

And I said, "Mom, did you ever think about maybe telling him where he could go if he were to trust in Christ?"

But the one thing that she was sure of and she wanted especially her family to know: Do not think for one moment she is in heaven because she was religious or because she tried to do right or because she was good or anything else. She is there because Jesus Christ came into this world to save sinners that trust in him.