

Know Christ, Know the Gospel

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Based upon what God has done for you in Christ, lay down your life. And this is absolutely spectacular. This is what makes Christianity something other than slavery or a drudgery. We give our lives away as people who are mesmerized by something; as people who have seen something so great that they consider it a small thing to give their life away.

I would submit to you this morning that the reason why some people are so grudging and sparing with the way they give their life away to God is because they do not know the mercies of God revealed in the Person of Jesus Christ. Many people in our churches are absolutely unconverted to start off with. But even those who are truly converted, they languish in poverty, even in the middle, sometimes, of sound expository preaching. And why is that? I've come to a conclusion: You can obey all the laws of expository preaching, and still the preaching be Christless!

You have to understand that when you come to a text, and you preach the text, it must still all be about Christ, or it will be nothing more than a quaint, moral teaching. That is why we see Spurgeon's sermons enduring and enduring. It is because every time he took a text, he made his way to Christ immediately. It was all about Christ.

I would submit to you that every word in this Book is about Christ. I would submit to you that nothing in this Book can be understood apart from Christ. I would submit to you that everything God the Father has ever done, He has done for Christ, by Christ, through Christ, and in Christ. Outside of Christ, there is nothing! — Nothing exists; everything is absolutely absurd!

From where does self-sacrifice come? Is it just that, "Well, the kingdom of God advances violently and the violent take it by force"? There is just some men who are full of determination and will to do the right thing and they give their life away? If that's true, it's idolatry, and it's self-worship. As brother Charles Leiter has said to me several times, those men who violently take the kingdom by force, they are not violent in their strength and self-will, they are violent in that they are desperate! They know their weakness, they know their need. And that knowing of their weakness makes them so desperate they grab a hold of the kingdom with all their might.

But what makes a person give his life away? I would submit to you there is only one biblical reason: That they have glimpsed something of the glories of God in the face of Christ. Christianity, although it has law and an ethic and a morality, it is not about rule keeping or ethics or morality. To make the United States of America a moral people would just make them two-fold sons of hell.

Christianity is about Christ. It is about grace. It is about redemption. And as I said last night, if you notice that your love for God is waning or is not what it should be, (as all of us should say that,) or that you do not glorify God as you ought, or that you need to grow, or that you need to find power over pornography, you do so by running to discover more of the glories of God in the face of Christ. Him! It all has to come back to Him or it's idolatry! Everything. Good theology is always going to create fire, that's one of the ways that you know it's good theology. And if it doesn't create fire, it's not the fault of truth. It's either being taught incorrectly, or being listened to by unconverted ears.

You want to be filled with fire. You want to be able to go out there and lose your life for the sake of Christ. It's a rather easy endeavor — just know Him. His glory, His beauty, His power, His life. Know what God has done for you in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Teach them who God is. Show them the works of God. Teach them about Jesus Christ. The problem is, many pastors cannot do that because it is hard work to search out that treasure.

Paul is going to urge them; but Paul in a way is going to seek to imprison them. Paul called himself a prisoner of Christ Jesus. I believe that he meant more than just chains on his hands, don't you see? He really was a prisoner. The love of God had captured him. You see, he no longer belonged to himself. He had such a revelation of the glory of God in the person of Christ that he had become captivated. That's what you need. The only thing that can hold you on course is if you become a prisoner of the grace of God; the revelation of God.

It is amazing how greater and greater understanding, intimate understanding of the person of God in the Gospel— it, in itself, separates you; it so mesmerizes you. It is no longer a man who looks at the world, and looks at Christianity, and then tries to make a decision which one he should follow. But it is a man almost in a trance who has caught a glimpse of something of Christ and can no longer even look to the world.

You see, the Gospel of Jesus Christ is not Christianity 101. It is not the first little truths that you learn so that you can be saved, and then a little thing or steps that you take to other people and share with them so that they can also make their decision. The Gospel is everything!

Let me put it in this way: There is much talk today about the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, or how it will occur; when it will occur; what will be the events preceding and what would follow, and all these different things. Let me assure you of one thing: You would understand everything about the Second Coming of Jesus Christ on the day it occurs. I can promise you that. But I can also tell you this: You will pass an eternity of eternities and you will never even begin to understand the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The Gospel is NOT four spiritual laws! It's not, "Do you know you are a sinner? Do you want to go to Heaven? Would you like to pray this prayer?" The Gospel is what the entire Bible is about. It is the greatest manifestation of God that we will ever have, and I will submit to you that we will spend all of eternity tracking out what God has done for us in Christ and in the Cross of Christ. And if you can ever see that — I have spent, literally, the last 12 years of my life, hours and hours, almost hours and hours a day doing one thing: reading and writing about "Christ Died For Me". I haven't even begun. I can't sleep at night because of it. And what I want you to see is you don't need so much trappings. You only need to realize where the treasure is found — It's found in the Cross of Christ. And that truth will carry you anywhere the providence of God decrees for you to go. That is the power of missions: God becoming flesh, dying under the wrath of God, that God might be just and the justifier of men.

What more do you need? There is an eternity of worship in this one thing: Christ died for sinners.