

# Radical Christianity

by Glenn Meldrum

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*Jesus calls His followers to a radical and extreme commitment to Him, requiring absolute and complete abandonment of their lives.*

**Duration:** 49:29

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:33, Matthew 16:21, Matthew 16:24-26, Luke 19:10, John 3:16, Galatians 6:14

**Topics:** "The Cross", "Self Denial"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the teachings of Jesus in Matthew 16. He begins by highlighting the importance of paying attention to the events that lead up to Jesus' teaching. The speaker emphasizes that the cross is a symbol of complete surrender and denial of self. He criticizes the watering down of the gospel in modern Christianity and emphasizes the need to live by the standard set by Christ. The speaker concludes by emphasizing the importance of focusing on the love and beauty of Jesus rather than seeking happiness in material possessions.

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## Transcript

What I want to look at this evening is the radicalness of Christianity. Christianity is absolutely and 100% radical because of who the founder of Christianity is. And Christianity, true biblical Christianity, is radical because Jesus is radical.

Jesus was radical coming into this world. Everything about him was radical. The very concept that God would take upon flesh and blood and be conceived in the womb of a woman is radical beyond comprehension, much less that he would be birthed through natural childbirth and then walk in obscurity and in poverty rather than walking in the palaces of kings and then to be revealed to Israel at the proper time and then to be rejected and hated and ultimately crucified.

Everything about Jesus is absolutely radical. Everything that he did was a radical love for humanity, to reach out to humanity and to change us for his glory and for his fame. And so it's radical.

The unfortunate thing that we have done in America is that we've removed the radicalness of it. We have made a tame Christianity. And so as a result, when Christianity becomes tame, it becomes powerless.

And when it becomes powerless, it no longer has the ability to change the world around it. But what ends up happening is the world ends up changing the church as a result. And so we have lost the radicalness.

I mean, if we're going to be really honest, we've lost the radicalness. We have grown comfortable. And it's kind of nice being comfortable, isn't it? I mean, we may be involved in the church, but still being radical, you know, that upsets too much.

And then it can get us in trouble sometimes. So that's not always fun. It's what's necessary.

It's what's necessary for a perishing world. It's what's necessary for the church. We are called to be radical like our master was radical.

And that's what we're going to look at, the radicalness of Christianity. And we're going to look at a couple of of teachings of Jesus that is absolutely radical. Here again is one reason why we're a tame church across this country, is because we have removed the radicalness of Christ, because we have forgotten or never known or never examined it or never really wanted to embrace it, the radicalness of the gospel that He preached.

Jesus was radical. He was radical in His teachings. What He called His people to do and His disciples to do was absolutely radical in every dimension of it.

And so this radical Jesus that had a radical teaching calls His disciples to be radicals as He was. Turn with me to Matthew 16. What I'm going to do is just kind of set before you the picture of what's going on, the situation of what's taking place here.

Before Jesus begins His teaching here, there are some events that take place. And these events are very interesting because they happen one right after another. These are simultaneously happening.

As we look at these, one thing's going to happen, then immediately another thing's going to happen, and then Jesus will immediately go into His teaching. So He's going to use these two events that take place, and He's going to use them as a stepping stone in teaching. And Jesus did that wonderfully.

He did that constantly. Everywhere He went, no matter if it was a bad event, a good event, or whatever, He took those situations and used them as stepping stones to present truth and to turn it for the benefit of people. Beginning in the 13th verse, you have Jesus ask a question, and He says, Who do people say that I am? The people end up responding, and they say, you know, Elijah or John the Baptist, or they give a bunch of different, you know, not excuses, but statements that the populace, in their conception of who Jesus was.

Jesus is confrontational, for love's sake, not for meanness. He was the perfect expression of love, even though He would go to the scribes and Pharisees and say, woe unto you, scribes, Pharisees, hypocrites, it was all an act of love, to reprove when reproof was needed, to warn when warning was needed, to woo when the wooing was needed. But He was radical.

He was always confronting people with where they were at, to change them, so they wouldn't stay where they were at, but so He could move them where He wanted them to be. And so He personalizes it. Then He said, first He says, Who do people say that I am? Well, that's not enough.

Jesus wanted to get to the real issue. He says, Who do you say that I am? Always brings it to the personal. Who do you say that I am? From the story, we have the situation where Peter rises up, and he ends up very quickly responding, saying, You are the Christ, the Son of God.

Now, Peter didn't fully understand what he was saying. He didn't understand the full extent of it. And Jesus responds and says, Flesh and blood didn't reveal this to you.

It was my Father in heaven who revealed it to you. So, Peter was walking in the Spirit, right? He heard the voice of God. He was in the spot that God could speak to him.

And he heard it. And he responded boldly, You are the Messiah. Now, he didn't understand fully what Messiah meant.

He didn't understand that Jesus was incarnate in flesh and blood. He didn't have that revelation. It wouldn't be until after the resurrection that that would become a reality to him.

It would have been too overwhelming for them to even try and comprehend such a thing at that point. But they did believe that He was the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies of being the Messiah. And they embraced that.

This was a tremendous, tremendous revelation. For Peter to boldly state it, You are the Christ, the Son of the living God. You know, it's wonderful when we come to a point in our life and we come to that understanding that Jesus is the Messiah.

We have the benefit of understanding what it means for Him to be the Son of God. We have the benefit of knowing who He is, that He was God, incarnate in flesh and blood, and that He died for us and rose again. We have the benefit, the joy of that.

And so it becomes easy for us to go and respond and say, Well, Jesus, You are God. You are the Messiah. I put my faith in You.

That's much easier. But let's look at the next event. And we have to understand this next event immediately follows.

It tells us then that Jesus began to teach His disciples, His apostles, that He was going to die in Jerusalem and be raised again. And so in the 21st verse, He begins His discourse. He speaks on His death in Jerusalem.

So get the picture here of what's going on. Jesus says, Who do you say that I am? They say, You are the Messiah. Then He says, I'm going to die in Jerusalem.

I'm going to go to Jerusalem and the chief priests are going to take me. They're going to hand me over to the pagans and they're going to crucify me. And in this situation, when Jesus reveals that He's going to be crucified, Peter has now a totally different response to Jesus.

And so what happens? Let's look at the 21st verse. He says, From that time on, Jesus began to explain to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law and that He must be killed and on the third day be raised to life. Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him.

Never, Lord, He said, this shall never happen. Now, this is interesting. Here, just a few minutes before, He's in the Spirit saying, You are the Messiah.

And now Jesus says, I'm going to die. And Peter says, No way, Jesus, You can't die on the cross. Listen to the response of Jesus in the 23rd verse.

Jesus turned and said to Peter, Get behind me, Satan. You are a stumbling block to me. You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men.

This is really a strange situation. I mean, here He is, Peter's in the Spirit, and now, moments later, He is being used by the devil. That's disturbing, isn't it? I mean, that is disturbing.

It's one thing to think, well, maybe it's days or whatever, you know. Alright, I had a bad day. But this is like moments later.

Here He hears from God, and then moments later He's in the flesh hearing that which is carnal and worldly, and even that which is satanic, because it was against what Jesus had come to do. You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men. That's ultimately the rebuke to Peter.

Get behind me, Satan, was a rebuke to Satan. So at the same time that Jesus was rebuking Peter, He was also rebuking Satan. But the rebuke ultimately to Peter was, you don't have in mind the things of God, but the things of men.

Now this doesn't seem like a really big thing to us. I mean, we can come to church and have a wonderful time in church and be blessed and worship and have a great time and hop in the car and all the kids are there. And then, in essence, we have a Peter experience where we just get totally in the flesh on the way home.

I think we've all had those in one way or the other. Or we're totally in the flesh coming to church. It was a nightmare coming and then we get there and then we're trying to somehow get in the Spirit.

You know, that can be harder. But we've had those, we've experienced that type of thing. Maybe not as radical a situation and a transition in just moments as what happened with Peter, but we've probably had some pretty close.

But let's get to the core issue of what was really going on here because there's some issues that I think are very important. And Jesus is going to use these events to now begin some teaching. Why is it that Jesus said to Peter, you don't have in mind the things of God, but the things of men? There's a reason for that.

In Matthew 10, Jesus brings out something that we have forgotten or never known or never understood in America. Peter understood this, and this is what moved Peter to respond the way that Peter did. Peter understood this.

We don't understand it. Now, I'm not saying that as an excuse. We need to understand it.

We should be understanding this. But it's this one little statement that Jesus said in Matthew 10, verse 24. He says, It is enough for the student to be like his teacher and the servant like his master.

Peter understood something. When Jesus says, Who do you say that I am? It was easy for him to say, in one sense, you are the Messiah. Then when Jesus says, I'm going to die on the cross, it was a whole other thing for Peter to say, I'll go there with you.

Because Peter understood that the servant or the student was not greater than the teacher. Whatever the teacher did, the student must do. We have to go back into the teaching days of Jesus.

When you come to a situation of a group of people that's following a rabbi like Jesus was, a teacher like that, they had given themselves over to that teacher and to the teaching and to the commands. They had surrendered themselves. So if the teacher told them, as what Jesus did many times, and let's look at one example.

He goes to his disciples and he says, Jesus, hop in a boat and go to the other side of the sea. Peter was a fisherman. And some of the other ones were fishermen.

And they knew what stormy clouds looked like. They knew when a storm was coming. And I can imagine Peter went and looked and said, Jesus, a storm's coming.

And Jesus said, get in the boat, go to the other side. And what did they do? They got in the boat. They went to the other side.

Because there was this principle that when the teacher tells us, we do it. An obedience. It was just an accepted thing.

If you came under a voluntary discipleship, if you chose to be disciplined by a teacher, then you accepted and embraced what that teacher taught. And you followed him no matter what he was asking. And for Jesus to go to his apostles and say, I will go to the cross, meant that what the teacher did, whatever the teacher did, the student had to.

It's very interesting that Jesus went and He started accumulating around Him the apostles and the disciples. He would go around and He would heal the sick, cast out devils, make the blind to see, the lame to walk, and so on. He'd do all kinds of miracles.

He did the miracles first. He performed them. He lived it out.

He lived out the holiness. He lived out an abandoned life before them. And then you know what He does? He goes to them.

He says, now I send you to heal the sick, make the blind to see, and the lame to walk. He always did it Himself. The teacher would be the example of it first, and then the people would have the example to follow.

That's the way it was done. So when Jesus was being the example, saying, I'm going to go to the cross, the apostles had to understand what that really meant. It meant, I've got to go to the cross too.

That means I have to die. It's one thing to say, Jesus is God. It's another thing to say, I will give up every fiber of my being to You.

Two different things. Easy to say, Jesus is God. Easy to go and pray a little prayer, and to kind of do some Christian things.

It's a whole other thing to abandon our life to Him. Every fiber of our being, every want, every care, every ambition, every desire, everything that we are, everything of our past, all of our future, to abandon it all. That's a whole other thing, and that's much harder than what we would really like to admit.

Because it is abandonment to Him, and we have this hard time with abandonment. We really do. We have a hard time with yielding.

We have a hard time with surrender. So here's Peter in one moment in the spirit, and in the next moment in the flesh. And you know, it's just like Jesus.

Just like Jesus. He always did this, time and again. The rich young ruler comes up to Jesus and he makes all these boasts.

He lied to Jesus. Okay? The rich young ruler lied to Jesus. And the rich young ruler came up to Jesus and says, I keep all the commandments.

No, he didn't. He broke all the commandments. That's just the reality of it.

There's not a person in this room that hasn't broke all of the Ten Commandments. I mean, we've broke them all. That rich young ruler broke them all.

But Jesus didn't deal with that issue. He could have confronted the rich young ruler and said, Okay, now you just lied to me and all this other stuff. I know you.

I know you. I know where you've been. You haven't kept any of the Ten Commandments.

He could have done that, but he didn't. Jesus went to the core issue. And with the rich young ruler, what was the idol in his life? It was his wealth.

Jesus went after that. That's what he did. With one individual it would be one thing, with another it would be another thing.

But he went after the real issue. And what did he do with Peter? It's almost like Jesus set him up so he could deal with the problem that was not just in Peter's life, but in all of their lives. And so he says, Who do you say that I am? And the Spirit of God, through the direction of the Father, went and brought the Messiah to Peter.

And he heard the voice and he responded. He says, You are the Messiah. And then Jesus took it a step further and says, I'm going to die on the cross.

Knowing what was going to happen. Knowing that Peter would go and say, Don't do it, Lord. That Satan, that he would open himself up to Satan in this situation and to operate in the flesh.

Jesus allowed it to happen that he could ultimately take him into a place of teaching. Now let's look at Matthew 16. In the 24th verse.

A little recommendation when you read your Bibles. Look at transitional words. They're kind of fun.

Sometimes we don't pay attention to them. So as a result, we miss things that are tied together. And you have transitional words like end and yet and then.

And that's what in the 24th verse it begins with, with the NIV translation. It says, Then Jesus said to his disciples. So he just rebukes Peter.

Just rebukes Satan. And he instantly turns it into a teaching. Then Jesus said to his disciples, If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

25 says, For whoever wants to save his life will lose it. But whoever loses his life for me will find it. What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world yet forfeits his own soul? What can a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels.

And then he will reward each person according to what he has done. So let's begin to look at this. He says, If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

Let's take it right back to the situation. So often when we read the Bible, we read the Bible from our understanding, from our experience, from 2,000 years of history that's gone on before us. And we can read things and not understand what was really taking place.

Jesus hadn't yet died on the cross. But yet he goes to them and he says, You must take up your cross and follow me. Let's look at the concept of the cross in that day and age.

Eventually you'll find statements that'll come out of Paul about the beauty of the cross, that to the world it's foolishness, but to those who are saved, that it's wonderful. I mean, the concept's going to be changed in the Christians because of what it accomplished. But until that point in time, the cross was a very evil, ugly thing in their minds.

Only the worst criminals were crucified on crosses. It was the worst of the worst. It was the murderers, the people that were in treason against Rome.

Whoever was the worst in society would be the ones that would be hanging on the cross or those who, like I said, would be in rebellion against Rome. It wasn't a pretty thing. Not just that, in the Old Testament you have the statement about cursed is anyone who dies on the cross.

That was a prophecy before the concept of crucifixion was ever even thought of. When that prophecy came out, crucifixion wasn't even used anywhere on the planet at that time. So the Jews had this concept of crucifixion as a curse that whoever hung on that cross was cursed of God.

This is not a pretty picture. Jesus is not painting this warm, fuzzy relationship that, oh, if we get saved, everything's just going to be wonderful and we'll have no more problems. What He's saying is, if you're going to be My disciple, you need to pick up your cross and follow Me.

It was even more radical in that situation when He spoke it than we can imagine. I just want you to think about this here. Jesus, you know, go back to the illustration and everything that goes on.

Their mouths are already hanging open because Jesus, before the other apostles, rebukes Satan and rebukes Peter. So they're all kind of like going, oh, okay, what do we do now? So they're already on edge, and then Jesus says, if you don't pick up your cross, you can't be My disciple. Jesus was not asking for part of their life.

We've got to understand, He was being radical to the very core because the demands of Christianity are absolutely radical. We've removed the radicalness of them because we don't want the radicalness. In essence, we do what Peter did.

He says, you are God, but don't ask Me to die on the cross with you. In essence, that's what it comes down to be. So we are tame Christians.

In the end, Jesus does not need your wisdom, your abilities, your money, your talents. He doesn't need none of it. He doesn't need a single thing that you have of yourself.

What He wants and what He died on the cross for is not your sin. What He wants is you. Your absolute, total, and complete abandonment.

Every fiber of your being, every hurt, every pain, every joy, every success, your past and your future, everything. That's what Christianity is. That's what Jesus was stating here, that you must die, you must give up everything and follow Me.

Now that's tough, isn't it? Now it's absolutely worth it. They didn't understand that. They didn't understand how worth it would be, because to them the cross was a very ugly thing.

To them the cross was a very terrible thing. Not just that, the crucifixion was an absolutely miserable way to die. It wasn't like having a spear thrown through your chest and you could die relatively quick.

It was a slow death of suffocation. Agonizing, agonizing, agonizing death. And so they understood that this was going to be the end of it.

It's going to be over. I might have made this quote to you before, but it's such a good quote, I'll use it again. It's by a man named A.W. Tozer, which was a precious man of God.

He made the statement, he says, the old cross is a symbol of death. It stands for the abrupt, violent end of a human being. The man in Roman times who took up his cross and started down the road had already said goodbye to his family and friends.

He was not coming back. He was going out to have it ended. The cross made no compromise, modified nothing, spared nothing.

It flew all of the man completely in for good. It did not try to keep on good terms with its victim. It struck cruel and hard, and when it had finished its work, the man was no more.

The man was no more. The challenge we have is that in 21st century Christianity and the last half of the last century, we watered down so much of the gospel to try and make it palatable to bring the people in. Well, let's lower the standard a little bit and we'll bring in the masses of people rather than understanding that Christ has given the standard, and that is the standard we are to live by, that we are to promote, that we are to preach, that we are to bring people up to, that we are to help them up to that place.

Not condemn them, not belittle them or anything else. Love them up to that place. Help them with everything they have sinned, so that they can obtain the high calling of what it means to be a Christian.

And then ultimately from that place, not of arrogance, out of brokenness, out of neediness, that we cry to a perishing world and we call to them, says, come up, not to lower our standards, to accommodate them, but to keep the power of God and the place of intimacy and of His presence in our midst, so that the people are drawn to it, though the call is great, though the crucifixion is a reality for them, that they must die. The wonder of it is that they see the resurrection beyond it. If we don't understand the resurrection and all we focus upon is the cross, then that can be kind of hopeless.

We're told in the teaching of Paul, what good would it be if Jesus died for our sins and did not rise again? He said, we would be men most miserable. So the hope is not just in the crucifixion, which needs to be a reality in our life, but in the resurrection, so that there's resurrection power to walk in holiness, resurrection power to walk in intimacy, resurrection power to be an overcomer. You know, conversion, and I don't want to take the time to dwell upon this, but conversion in its very nature is radical, absolutely radical.

Here's a person at war with God. Every person that is not a true Christian is at war with God. Every single one.

I don't care if they're nice, if they're mean, if they're a murderer, or if they're a religious individual. If they're not living a surrendered life, they are not truly born again, truly walking in a right relationship with God, then they're at war with God. It tells us in 1 John that all sin is lawless.

All sin. So those who are not walking with Jesus are in blatant lawlessness against God. They have refused to walk in a place of obedience.

They are at war with Him. That's a horrifying thing. God is fighting against them then.

Fighting against their life. Even though He's doing things to try and bring them to repentance, because He loves them, they have still placed their lives at war with Him. Conversion is so radical, because here it takes this individual that was at war with God, at war with God, and He changes them from darkness, to their spiritual father being the devil, to now their spiritual father being God, and not just their spiritual father being God, but literally being adopted as sons and daughters, coming from darkness into light.

The whole concept of conversion is absolutely radical if we understand it. Jesus referred to it in a very interesting way. He referred to it as being born again.

Now I can't say this from experience, but I have a little bit of knowledge that has been imparted to me from others, that childbearing is a very painful process. Jesus used a very good example of being born again, because it hurts when all of a sudden a holy God reveals our unholiness, that we are sinners at war with Him. That hurts.

But there must be the pain before we can come into life. It must be. It's the way it is designed.

Jesus used a wonderful example of what it is to become a Christian. The transition, the radicalness of the gospel. Every Christian in this room, your conversion was absolutely radical to the core.

Now, He wants your Christianity to be lived out radically, but the initial salvation was radical. Then in that section of Scripture that we had looked at, He says, for whosoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for Me will find it. It's like an individual that is wanting to be happy.

We may know people like this. I mean, they may be relatives, they may be people we work with, and they're living crazy lifestyles. They're wanting to be loved, they're wanting to be happy, they're wanting to have joy, and they're pursuing this stuff.

But what they're pursuing is causing them greater pain. And as they pursue this, the pain gets worse, but yet they keep thinking there's something out there other than Christ that will make them happy, so they keep chasing after it. They keep desiring, they keep wanting it.

And as they seek this thing, this mysterious thing to make them happy, they can never find it. But the pain gets worse, and it's like you want to take them, and you say, I know the answer, but maybe you've told them, and they don't want to hear, and you want to shake them. I know the answer! There is an answer! But they continue on this relentless pursuit of supposed happiness that is unobtainable in this world.

Keep pursuing it, keep wanting it. They're out to save their life. I want to be happy with everything within them.

They're looking for their happiness. They're looking for their own purpose. They're looking for their own life.

And so all that follows is death and sorrow and agony as a result. And Jesus says that it's just the opposite for life. He says that we must give it up, that we must die to those things that cause me such problems.

You know, when Jesus calls us to the cross, He's not wanting to harm us. He's wanting to give us life. But He understands that there's a process there, that the old nature has to die.

That the passions and the lust, the pride, the self-will, the wants, the ambitions, they have to die. He understands that, because that is what has been our enemy. The devil's not our worst enemy.

We are. So often we end up blaming the devil, because we like to blame somebody, and usually we don't like blaming ourselves. And if we don't have the opportunity to blame our spouse, then we look for the devil.

But, of course, the healthiest thing is when we do wrong to blame ourselves. If we want to save our life, we have to lose it. We have to give it to control.

Let me just take you on a thought with this that's interesting. Let me try and demonstrate to you the radicalness of this, because this is very difficult. And it's a challenge until our dying day.

When we walk through the gates, it's done. The surrender's finished. It's complete.

There'll be no more rebellion, no more lawlessness within us, no more rebellion in our hearts, and no more wanderings of our hearts. I mean, it'll be done. We will be made perfect.

And it's over then, at that time. We'll be in pure life and never to taste of death again. But let me give you the situation.

As you have this darling little baby, newborn baby, and cute little adorable girl, and how long does it take, ladies, before that cute little adorable girl is grabbing the spoon from mama wanting to feed herself? I mean, six months? Maybe a little more? I mean, it depends on the child and their development. It doesn't take long. What's going on with that baby? Why is that baby grabbing it? Because the baby wants control.

Wants to be boss. And as that child gets older, its desire for independence, its desire for control of its life, gets greater. So they push the envelope.

Year by year, they push the envelope. How long is it before mama's heart is broken as that darling little girl now runs down the street and she can't find her? Scared stiff going, what happened to that little baby? First time, you see her stretching a little bit further, and then she's riding her bike, and then she goes around the block. Then your heart's pumping because you're scared stiff because she's stretching it more

and more.

And then she comes to teen years, and then you're just, man, it's just frantic. Because they're constantly pushing the envelope. They want to save their life.

They want to make the choices. And then supposedly they become adults at 18. Everything in life, everything in the natural, is moving people to independence.

Everything in the natural is moving them to say, I will control my life. I will say and decide my future. I will decide all those things.

And then we become Christians. And you know what Christianity is? 100% the opposite. It is abandonment, the giving up of control.

And that's why we have such a hard time. Because all we have known in this life is control. The control of our life, the control of our futures, the control of our ambitions, the control of our lives.

That's all we've known. And then we become Christians, and then the radicalness of the gospel comes and breaks into our world and says you must give up your life to gain my life. Now Jesus in the midst of it has this little statement here that I think is wonderful.

He gives clarity to the purpose. Why should I give up control of my life? Why? All my life has been this effort to have control. And then Jesus breaks into my world and says give it up.

Not just breaks into my world when I first become a Christian, but he's there relentlessly saying come on child, give it up. Give up the control. Give up the control.

It's time to surrender. It's time to yield control. Constantly doing that.

I mean the surrender issues don't end until like I said we walked in pearly gates. But he brings out the reason. Let's read that verse again.

It says for whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it. He gives the reason. The giving up of control is the gaining of him.

The prize. The total prize of Christianity is not the church, is not salvation, is not streets of gold, not a mansion up there, not eternal life. That's not the prize.

When you walk through them pearly gates, I'm not going to say you're not going to want to see your family, but the first thing you're going to be concerned about is not your family. You walk through them gates, your family may be standing there. They may be waiting.

If they've gone before you, they're going to understand something. That there's going to be one thing that can consume your thought, your mind, your heart. And when you see Him who sits on the throne, there's going to be nothing else in all of heaven that is even going to come close to take your mind and your heart.

You'll be enthralled by Him who sits on that throne. That's it. And who knows however long you'll be on your face and weeping and adoration.

Maybe a year. Maybe a thousand years. Maybe a millennium.

And then you'll get up and find your family. But the prize is Him. But the prize is Him now.

It's Him now. What happens is we think the prize is things and stuff and business and activity. And so life gets weary.

It gets burdensome as a Christian because we look to the things to make us happy rather than the Giver, rather than the Creator. Why am I to die? Why am I to go to Calvary with my Savior? Why am I to die to my passions and pride? Why am I to die to my ambitions? Die to my hurts? Why am I to die to it all? Why am I to deal with those issues? Because of Him. Because of the beauty of His love, the wonder of His love.

Because He is better than life. Luke 14 is more difficult than Matthew 16. Luke brings it out in rawer terms.

Matthew said it nicely. Let me read just one verse. If you made this the effort of your life, I guarantee you you would be one radical Christian.

You would be like a Paul. You see, what made Paul Paul was not that Paul was an educated man, even though he was. Not that at one time he was a wealthy man.

What made Paul Paul was what we're talking about here. I believe he heard the Word. He heard the teaching of the Gospel.

And he didn't say, Is this true? He didn't say, Does this fit in my life? Is this comfortable? Is it convenient? He went and said, That's true. It's over. That's what I'm doing.

There was no debate. There was no arguing. There was no questions.

This is what Jesus told him to do. Alright? Every fiber of me will be defined by that teaching then. And he turned the world upside down.

The testimony of Paul was he turned the world upside down. Not because of all of his natural giftings. I believe he turned the world upside down because of his abandonment.

Because he lived a surrendered life. And what is this one verse? Luke 14, 33. It says, In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has, he cannot be my disciple.

That's tough. In this chapter he says, Cannot. Where in Matthew it says, He is not worthy.

I believe in the American church we have so lowered the standard of Christianity that there are many people in the churches that are not truly Christians. We have so lowered it that all that it takes is a little hand raising. And then they're right with God.

The problem is, I think Jesus meant what he said here. And he says that if you don't give up everything, you cannot be his disciple. What do we do? We say, well, you know, he's kind of a disciple, maybe, kind of, sort of, could be, somewhat, possibly.

We kind of hope maybe he is. But Jesus made it very plain. There is no debate on it.

But yet one commentator made this statement. He says, This is perhaps the most unpopular term of Christian discipleship and may prove to be the most unpopular verse in the entire Bible. Clever theologians can give you a thousand reasons why it does not mean what it says.

But simple disciples drink it down eagerly assuming that Jesus knew what he was saying. I love the statement that Leonard Ravenhill said once. He says, One of these days, some simple soul will get hold of the book of God, read it, believe it, and live it.

And the rest of us will be ashamed. Because the power of God being released through his people is not based upon our intellect or upon our abilities or upon our wisdom or upon our finances or upon church polity or anything else. It's based upon the lives of individuals that are surrendered to that place that God can entrust his presence and power to flow through them.

And so he wants his power. He yearns for his power. That's what Pentecost is all about.

The power of God to be released through the church. He wants his power for us to be a witness. But do you know how you get to Pentecost? There's only one way to Pentecost.

You have to go through Calvary. It's the only way. See, there's no skipping Calvary.

There's no skipping the resurrection. And there may be many people, many Pentecostals who speak in tongues, but because they speak in tongues doesn't mean they got the power. I believe in the baptism of the Holy Ghost.

I believe it is biblical. I believe it's sound. I believe it is for any believer that will accept it.

But because people speak in tongues doesn't mean the power's there. The gift is given so we might have the power, so we might have that intimacy, so we might have the power to surrender and abandon our life and fall in love with Him and become people yielded to Him. Yielded to Him.

History is full of men and women. Some of tremendous intellect, some of just simple people. He's taken them from all walks of life.

He's taken the very pretty and He's taken the very twisted. But every single time those that He has done phenomenal things through, there is a common denominator that they came to a point in their life of surrender, of abandonment, that Christ could grab hold of that life and freely pour His power through them, not because they were good or because they were talented or because they were people skilled in ability, but because they were surrendered. Because they had come to the point to understand that whoever saves his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life will find it.

And then the life, the resurrection life of Christ flows through that person. I want to take you to another verse. And this is a very difficult one.

Turn to 1 John, the Epistle of John. John was the same one who leaned his head on the breast of Jesus. Ever think of that? He heard the heartbeat of God.

I mean, he literally heard the heartbeat of God. And that expression is there in the Gospel of John showing his affection for the Messiah, showing his affection for Christ. And so here's a man who knew what it was to eat and sleep and minister with Him and to be sent and taught and knew all of those dynamics of it.

And he makes this statement. He takes all of the Gospel of Christianity, all of the Gospels, all four Gospels, and reduces them to one little verse. Second chapter of 1 John, in the sixth verse.

It says, Whoever claims to live in Him must walk as Jesus did. All of Christianity, every bit of it is summed up right into this. This is what it's all about.

Here, Jesus lived it out. He lived it out, what we were to live, how we are to live, how we are to abandon ourselves to Him, to the will of the Father. If we want to be the Christians in this world that we are called to be, then this must be what defines Him.

And let's just take a couple of minutes and look at what this means. If everything... And I'm just going to touch on it. I mean, you could go for hours and sit down and just think this through and dwell on this.

What does it mean in this area of my life that if everything I do, I must walk as You did? Let's look at what's the very basic thing about Jesus. I began with it in the very beginning of the message. Everything about Christ was radical.

The incarnation and life and death and resurrection was radical. What would be a concept that would define all of those acts? Sacrifice. Jesus lived one life of sacrifice.

From being conceived in the womb of a woman to dying on the cross. His entire life was a life of sacrifice. You do not find Jesus living a life that is self-centered for His own purposes, for His own ambitions.

Is my life a sacrificial life? Are there areas of my life that I don't want sacrifice in? I can compartmentalize my life and say, well, I'll sacrifice this and I'll sacrifice that and some with this. But this area here, well, this is mine. This is my little box.

This is my little world. This is what I want. This is what I will do.

He lived every dimension of His life in sacrifice because of His love to the Father. Holiness. Holiness defined Christ.

He was absolutely holy in heaven. Holy when He was conceived in the womb of a woman. Holy when He died on the cross.

Holy when He rose again from the dead. Absolutely holy as life. There was no holier life that ever walked because it was God incarnate in flesh and blood.

Absolute holiness. So if I'm going to walk as He walked, guess what that means? That means holiness. That means holiness with what I watch with my eyes, what I listen to with my ears.

Holiness in my feet and where my feet take me and what I do. Holiness in my entertainment. Holiness in my busyness.

Holiness in my thoughts. Holiness in every dimension of my life. That is not legalism.

That's not legalism. Now, people can turn to legalism and you know what happens when it becomes legalism? This one little statement is left out. Let's go back to it.

For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses it for me, they leave out for me. Legalism is a law based upon their own wants, their own self, not upon a love relationship. When I love Him and the motive of my life is Him, holiness is not a problem because I want to be holy because the motive for holiness is then behind it.

Jesus, I want to be near to You. What displeases You? And whatever He shows me, I deal with. Holiness will define us then.

Another thing, Jesus was an absolute perfect fellowship with the Father. That goes back to the prize. Goes back to the prize.

If I'm going to walk as He did, that means what it's all about is walking in this relationship with Him. Would you know what separates me and Him? Every single time. Sin.

What restores relationship between me and Him? Sin. Holiness. Repentance.

Forgive me, God. I said a terrible thing. I did a terrible thing.

I thought a terrible thing. Forgive me, Lord. Cleanse me.

Relationship with the Father. We've got to keep the prize in front of us. When we lose the prize, then it's just do's and don'ts.

And Christianity gets very, very heavy when it's do's and don'ts. When we remember the prize, then there's the joy of it. It doesn't mean life isn't going to be hard.

A recent man who was martyred for the cause of Christ within the last hundred years, before he died, the letters he was able to get snuck out of prison was that he always thought being in a place of such persecution that it would be to sheer misery. But he made a statement in these letters. He says, I have never known such nearness to my Lord than when I have been suffering for Him.

And I'm not going to tell you I understand that. But I do believe there's a Savior that's near to His people that are suffering for Him. And do you know what we do? We really fight not to suffer.

I don't want to suffer. But we have to come to a point in our life where we don't run any longer from it. We don't try to live our life in this nice little protected bubble where nothing bad happens to us.

Because what happens with that, then we don't touch a perishing world. Do you know what happened when Paul went to cities? He had riots, revivals, and stonings. He upset the town.

Now, not that he meant to upset the town. He came to bring men and women to Christ. But because so many... You go to the situation in Ephesus.

What happens in Ephesus? So many people get saved that the idol makers are losing tremendous income. Demetrius, the silversmith who made idols, now starts a riot because their income is so affected because Paul came to town. Wouldn't that be wonderful if God could grab hold of our lives? Because God is not a respecter of persons.

There'll never be another Paul. There'll never be another Paul. But what God does to men and women, He can do again through us as what He did with Paul in our day and age, in our time.

He's not a respecter of persons. He's not a respecter of eras. He's not a respecter of nations.

He can do it again. He can do it again. He can do it just through average individuals who just say, Dear Jesus, me.

Would it be me? Would you use me? There's a process that he has to go through. And I'm just going to be honest. As I pastored for almost 12 years in the city of Detroit, we had constant prayer meetings for Revival.

My heart ached for Revival. Ached for it. I have sermons back in the early 80s.

Sermons I preached at that church on Revival. Just aching for it, and we never saw it. Never saw it.

You want to know why? Because I couldn't have handled it. There's too much garbage in my life. Too much self.

Too much pride. It would have destroyed me. And so God was good to hold it back.

And it's only when we start coming to the point to see how needy we are. Because let's go back to that thing where he says, Whosoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it. The issue really comes down to be an individual seeing how needy they are.

The person who's seeking to save their life, they don't see their need. And so because they don't see their need, they're not abandoning themselves to Christ. They think that they can still make themselves happy.

They still have the answer. They can still do it. But the one who is willing to give up his life has finally come to the point to see there is no life in me.

There is no power in me. There is no wisdom in me. Dear God, I can't change my own life, much less change a world.

Dear God, it must be you. And it comes to that point of neediness. And there's something about this God that is so phenomenal that he draws near to those who see how needy they are.

Let me just say a couple more things, then I'll close. What did Jesus come to do? He came to seek and to save that which was lost. And if I'm going to walk as he walks, do you know what I'm called to do? Seek and to save that which is lost.

And it's not a part-time job. It's not what works in my life. Jesus came to seek and to save the lost.

Do you want to know why he came to seek and to save the lost? Because he loved them. He didn't love their sin. He didn't love their rebellion.

He didn't love that they were at war with him. But he loved them. And he came to be the answer, the remedy to their sin.

What else did Jesus do? I mean, some of the statements are phenomenal. You look at the Gospels, and it says at times he came and he healed a whole multitude. Jesus walked in compassion and tender mercies towards the hurting.

He came to heal those who were hurting, whether it was physical, whether it was emotional, whether it was relational. He came to be the healer to a bruised and broken world that has suffered under the wages of sin. We are to be his agents.

In 2 Corinthians 5, it tells us that Christ has called us to be ambassadors so that he could make his appeal through us. His appeal. What's his appeal to a perishing world? Warns them of sin, yes, but calls them to

repentance that they might know him.

Makes his appeal of his heart that Jesus came to seek and to save the lost. If I'm to walk as he walked, then I must take that heart, that passion that he had for a perishing world, that passion to touch the hurting. Not just the hurting out there, but you know what happens when the hurting out there comes in here? They're hurting in here.

And not just that, as the strongest Christians, man, we can have some bad days, and we can hurt. And sometimes it might be a hug, sometimes it might be a prayer meeting, whatever the need may be. It's not just healing for them out there, it's healing also for us in here, because he cares.

And the last one, Jesus left all of his glory in heaven, knowing even from birth he would be hated, and that his life would be one where people would hate him, reject him, ridicule him, and ultimately crucify him. He didn't come with rose-colored glasses on, saying, I'm going to come, and they're going to embrace me, they're going to love me. He came to bring salvation to him, knowing the majority of humanity would reject him.

And the reason why I wanted to bring this up, because you know what hinders us so much in loving a perishing world? Because we're afraid of rejection. We're afraid that they're going to be angry with us. We're afraid they're not going to like us.

We're afraid we might lose a job over it, or we might have this problem. But yet everything about Jesus, if I want to walk as he did, I have to pick up those same things, and see those areas in my life where I fail, not beat myself up, but come to the point to say, Dear God, change me. Dear God, change me.

Let me just close with this little story. One of the first men baptized with the Holy Spirit, in England, his name was Smith Wigglesworth. Some of you are familiar with the name.

Phenomenal man of God. When the power of God came upon him, and the gifts of healing flowed through that man, the accounts are just mind-boggling. You know, cancers, everything you can imagine.

One particular account is, he took this lame child, and threw the child off the platform. By the time the child hit the ground, that child was running. But when he first received the baptism of the Holy Ghost, you know what? He still had a terrible anger.

He'd blow up at his wife if she had a meal that was not just quite right. And he saw it as a very evil thing. And so he got on his face.

And the accounts of it is that there'd be times he'd hide away for a week in prayer and fasting, saying, Dear God, break this thing in me. Break this thing. It has such a hold in my life.

And when it was finally broke, his wife went and says that she couldn't even recognize the man, because he'd been so transformed. So many things stay in our lives because we don't have that desire that burns in us for holiness. We don't have that desire for Him.

At any cost, Jesus, whatever hinders, please, O God, not beat ourselves up, but run to His feet and say, Lord, I want to be closer. Let's look to the Lord in prayer.

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