

Paul's Passion, Preaching, and Praying

by Leonard Ravenhill

Paul's passion and motivation were driven by the love of Christ, and he sought to magnify Christ in his body, whether through life or death.

Duration: 57:53

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 12:9-10, Philippians 1:20, Philippians 3:8, Philippians 4:5-8

Topics: "Apostle Paul", "Christian Discipleship"

Description

This sermon delves into the life and mindset of the apostle Paul, emphasizing his unwavering dedication to Christ, his sacrificial love, and his unshakable faith. Paul's example of prioritizing the glory of Christ above all else, even in the face of trials, challenges, and persecutions, serves as a powerful inspiration for believers. His prayer life, passion for souls, and willingness to suffer for the sake of the gospel are highlighted as key aspects of his extraordinary walk with God.

Transcript

I mentioned before that for years I drifted on in a self-made delusion by believing that in the second epistle of Paul to the Corinthians, chapter 5, where he gives a summary of all his expectations, I thought the 14th verse was the secret of his motivation. He says, "...the love of Christ constraineth me." I can't say that without thinking about the Marashal, the eldest daughter of the founder of the Salvation Army. She came to a church I passed that she was a tall, ungainly, large-shouldered woman, but a tremendous soul winner.

And she wrote a hymn, and one verse of the hymn says, "...there is a love constraining me to go and seek the lost. I yield, O Lord, my all to Thee to save at any cost. There is a fire that falls on me as in the upper room, destroying all carnality, dispelling fear and gloom.

There is a life which was given me, a life divine and strong. It carries me through every sea of sorrow, storm and wrong." You know that precious woman came from a fantastic family, and when she was less than 20 years of age she went to Paris, invaded Paris, and as a result had to go to jail. She invaded Switzerland, as a result she went to jail.

They lived in hardships, but you know she was like her daddy, she blazed with a holy fire. Remember, he wrote that hymn, "...Thou Christ of burning, cleansing flames, send the fire. Thy blood-bought gift tonight we claim, send the fire.

Look down and see this waiting host. Give us the promise..." You know, the Salvation Army never made anything about gifts, but God help us, they went through the world. They went into 90 countries in 70 years, not 90 cities.

Men didn't go for a holiday at weekend and give out a few tracts, they blazed for God. Their emphasis about the Holy Ghost was not power, but purity. They still have a banner, a red banner with a sign on it, and it says on there, a blaze for God, if I remember right.

An army that he raised up, well we need another Pentecost. I don't know whether we want it, but we need it. I don't know whether we pay the price for it.

But something's going to happen before too long, I'm absolutely sure of that. Well now then, I change from 2 Corinthians 5, 14, where Paul says, "...the love of Christ constraining..." I'm sure that was one factor, but I feel that this, here's the answer in Philippians 1 and verse 20. "...according to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, with all boldness as always.

Now also that Christ may be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death." "...that Christ may be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death." This city of Philip, well it's written in Philippians, Philippi was founded by who? It was founded by the father of Alexander. Yeah, Philip, but it's founded by Alexander. The other thing about it is this, that it was written on Paul's second missionary journey.

I guess the most unused part of your Bible is the maps in the back. I had a tutor that used to say, you can't understand the New Testament unless you read your maps. You see where Paul went.

I used to draw a map, but I can't draw these, good these days. But he goes to Asia Minor, here's say where he sets off to Jerusalem, he goes to Asia Minor. As Kipling would say, after he got saved, after he got vision, he put on his seven-league boots and he strode over Asia Minor.

Well you just trace in the back of your Bible, get a Philip's Atlas of the Bible. See how many miles he went, without automobiles, without planes. He went on ships, they wouldn't allow to go up a river these days, the Union wouldn't let them go.

No wonder he says he was in death's oft, in weariness, in fasting, in painfulness. He does more than a dozen men. You know, as I pray this, I say, God give me, give me just one percent of the passion and vision and unction that that man had.

He out-prayed everybody, out-fasted everybody, out-preached everybody. And he says, I want Christ to be glorified in my body. You know, Christ gave all he had for us, and you've got to give all you have for him.

He won't ask of you anything less than he gave, he won't ask any more than he gave, but that's his right. You see, the paradox is that God always uses dead men, he doesn't use live men, he uses dead men. This man had an experience of dying.

Let me go back here a minute. There's some wonderful things in this epistle. One thing, I don't know if you've noticed it, but never once does he mention sin in this epistle.

I'll tell you what he does though, and remember he's writing from a stinking prison. During World War II we were in England and we read in the newspaper that some prisoners in a prison in America had gone on

strike because they were only getting one egg in the morning. We only got one a month in England.

Boy, prison in America is like the Waldorf Astoria. They go on strike, they can't have colour TV, isn't that degrading? Poor souls. They ought to be rejoicing in it.

They can't have enough ping pong, they can't do this, they can't do the other. Here Paul is in one of the worst prisons that the world ever had, and yet fourteen times in this epistle he says either joy or rejoice, rejoice, rejoice, rejoice. You remember that he's, in the Thessalonian epistle he says that we were shamefully untreated at Philippi.

You remember they put him in jail, what for, no, no, no. It's a strange world we live in, you know, if you do bad things they put you in jail, if you do good things they put you in jail. How many of you want to go to jail? A Baptist preacher was put in jail in England many years ago, and in the course of being there for fifteen years, and how many prayers do you think were asked, Lord liberate him, liberate him, he got Paul out of prison, God didn't want him liberating.

People call me sometimes, would you ask the Lord to take this burden on me? No, somebody else would be praying he'd put it on you. The only way you get sense and reality is to carry that burden. John Bunyan, fourteen years in Bedford prison, I sat in his chair once, it didn't make me write any better, but I had the joy of sitting in the chair where he used to sit.

I sat in another chair that used to be occupied by Adam Clout, the great expositor, but it didn't make me a good expositor. I sat in a chair that the King of England sat in, but it didn't make me a king either. But in the prison adversity, he's saying to listen, come on you folk, rejoice in the Lord, rejoice, why do you hang your head? He says that Christ may be magnified by my body, whether by life or by death.

In the next verse he says, for me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. In other words, he says the only reason for me to live is it will be profitable for God if I live. I don't believe my life depends on circumstances, whether I fly or I don't fly.

I believe when God can't do without me, he'll call me home. When he says I need Ravenhill up here, he'll call me home. And I don't want to get there ahead of time, because I know some of you will drag your feet, you don't want to go anyhow.

Like a friend of mine, he said, would you like to go to heaven? He said yes, but it's not urgent. That Christ may be magnified by my body. Paul makes a lot of the body, doesn't he? Remember Romans 12, 1 and 2, he says, present your body a living sacrifice, wholly acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service, and be not conformed to this world, or as Phillips translates it, don't let this world press you into its mold.

But lots of people are getting pressed into the world's mold, by lifestyle and every other thing. You know, I cannot for a moment think about Paul saying that in the Philippians, that Christ may be magnified in my body. Let me relate it to Galatians chapter 6. And there he says, in verse 14, but God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.

Verse 17, henceforth let no man come near me. Get out of my way, the whole lot of you, philosophers, Stoics, poets, he meets them all in the 17th chapter of Acts, and he's totally king of the situation. I think he had the greatest brain the world ever knew, except apart from Jesus.

But he says, look, I want to tell you something. I could glory in my pedigree, I'm of the tribe of Benjamin, I'm of the seed of Abraham, I'm a Pharisee of the Pharisees, I have everything going for me, but he says, my richest gain I count but loss. We sing that, it doesn't mean a hill of beans.

But he's put all that stuff to death, but he says, no boasting. That's how, who translates it that way? Moffat translates it, but it says, God forbid. Moffat says, no boasting for me, not in pedigree, position, intellect, anything.

No boasting for me, save in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world is crucified unto me, and I am crucified to the world. And then he writes it off from henceforth let no man tell me, I bear in my body the marks. Now Moffat says, I bear the brands of Jesus Christ in my body.

Heracles is being called a father of history. I don't think he was. But he recites how in the days of the Apostle Paul, a man who was a slave could get away from his boss or whoever had him in captivity, and he would run to the temple of Heracles.

And there were altar fires burning, night and day, 24 hours a day. And there were men sitting with branding irons, like we brand cattle here. And you could choose which God you wanted to be branded for.

You say, I'll take that one. Okay, so what did they do? They take a branding iron and put it there, and how your flesh sizzled. You lift it up your instep, and they put it in your instep.

You pull down your toga, and they branded the back of your neck. So that your head belonged to your master, your feet belonged to your God, your hands belonged to your God. And Paul says, I bear in my body the brands of the Lord Jesus Christ.

There's a lovely hymn we used to sing in England. Let me think how to begin. Oh, I got it, I think.

All for Jesus, all for Jesus. All my being's ransomed powers. All my thoughts and words and doings.

All my days and all my hours. Let my hands perform His bidding. They're branded for Him.

Let my hands perform His bidding. Let my feet run in His ways. Let my eyes see Jesus only.

Let my lips speak forth His praise. All for Jesus, all for Jesus. Oh, what wonder, how amazing.

Jesus, glorious King of Kings. Yes, I know it, but I can't. Thank you, James.

But it fills me up. He, King of Kings, deigns to call me. Poor, bankrupt me.

He deigns to call me His beloved and lets me rest beneath His wings. Do you wonder, he said, all for Jesus. Paul would have enjoyed that so much.

You see, Paul had only one thing to live for, one person to live for, Christ. Whether by life or by death, I don't care, he says. If it pleases God to crucify me, crucify me.

If it pleases Him to put me in a stinking prison, let me stay there. Why? They did the most ridiculous thing they could do, putting the fellow in prison. What did he do? He got out of it.

But he got his revenge. He prayed an earthquake and wrecked the prison. I thought that was good.

Let me find this. The piece I was looking at here. He said in verse 10 of chapter 1 of Philippians here, that you may approve things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense.

Do you know what the Greek there is? Without wax. What does that mean? What does wax mean? It means this, that when they were chiseling, sculpting a marble statue, the man might be looking around and he chipped a piece of the ear off. And so it was damaged, it wouldn't be bought.

So what he did, he got a piece of the same stone and crushed it to powder. And then he mixed it with wax and he filled the ear in. And it was all right until the sun shone.

And when the sun shone, the guy's ear dropped off. And so he says, be sincere without wax, without any duplicity, without any hypocrisy. Now look what he says, and he's writing from prison.

I would that ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather to the furtherance of the gospel. No, that's senseless. What's he doing in prison? He can't write an epistle there.

Or at least not much. He'd be more useful outside. This man has a ministry of healing.

He raises the dead. And he's stuck in a stinking prison. What good is he doing for God's glory? Why did he go to some other country and exercise his power? His authority over death, his authority over demons, his authority over doubt and darkness.

But there he is in prison. And he writes an epistle which has blessed millions of people since then. But listen to what he says.

In verse 13 he says, My bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace and in other places. Isn't that great? The guy in prison is infecting those in the palace. Look at chapter 4 and verse 22.

And this is how effective it is. You know, we sing, oh well, it was a lovely deliverance. They were in jail and they sang praise at midnight and the jailer let them out.

Isn't that nice? They whipped his back. They tore him like they tore his master. His back was like a plowed field.

And yet as he sings the praise of God, it echoes down the corridors in the prison. And the result is what? Well, what's it say in chapter 4? And verse 22. Verse 21, he says, Salute every saint in Christ Jesus.

The brethren which are with me greet you and all the saints salute you. Chiefly they that are of Caesar's household. My professor used to say Caesar's household was next door to hell.

And this man goes to prison in order to get a testimony into the palace and into Caesar's household. He'd have a miniature revival there. This week somebody sent me a notice.

I was profoundly moved with it. Somebody had been up in Russia and then over into one of the worst countries in the whole world, Siberia. Which is, I mean, when it's 25 degrees there, it's summer.

It's the most frozen, dark, difficult place. Food is almost unobtainable. Places are inaccessible.

And there's an old man there who has one page of the Bible. One page. And that's all he's had all his life.

And yet he's had dozens and dozens. He hasn't had a mass revival. Dear God, you and I have every page in the Bible and ten other versions.

What in God's name do we do? I like the way our dear Paul is leaving Monday. Time and again he's held this book up here and says, Whatever books we're going to be judged by when we get to heaven, surely we're going to be judged by this book. Do you know you'll wish you hadn't boasted about so much Bible knowledge when you get there? When God says this is what you boasted of and there's where you lived.

You talked about that, you lived down there. You talked freedom, you lived in bondage. You talked purity and you lived in pollution.

You talked liberty and you were a captive. It's an awful thing ever to have the word of God. I say almost to all the fellows that come in my room, I don't have a lot of books, I have a good few hundred.

And I say, you know, all these men that wrote profound things that they wrote, and yet not one of them had a bigger Bible than I have. Madame Guillén wrote some wonderful things. We're from a lousy prison, it's not there any longer.

The walls were 30 feet thick. And they shut her up, they took her Bible away. They wouldn't let a confessor go and have fellowship with her.

And there she sings triumphantly, A little bird am I, shut off from fields of air. Content within this cage to lie, for God has placed me here. Well pleased a prisoner to be, because my God it pleased a thief.

It pleased God to shut a tender, gracious, brilliant woman up in prison for years. What pleasure does God get out of it? One she never murmured, she never complained. She loved him more and more.

She said there's nobody else to love anyhow. I love you, love so amazing, so divine. I had a brilliant young man came to see me today, my son Paul.

And we had a wonderful time. We've hardly had any time with him at all this time on home. I'll be going Monday now, be merciful.

If you want to talk to him, please don't go to the house. He won't be there tonight anyhow. But call on the phone if you want to wish him goodbye.

But he was telling me today, he'd been reading, again, part of this woman, Madame Guion. Her works were being republished in America recently. And there was a French teacher called de Dion, or de Dio I suppose it is.

And he said, you know, it pains me to think how few people really enter into a living relationship with God. We're all living on the perimeter. We're all in water to the ankles, not water to swim in.

I'm not going to listen to your sermons and all the rest of it. I want to see God work. Paul, I think, was the greatest preacher ever.

He wasn't an orator. Apollos was the orator of the early church. He was the greatest theologian.

He had the greatest concept of God. But remember what he says, my speech, my word, my preaching was not in word only, but in power and demonstration. And that's more than tongues.

Dear God, we've got lost in gifts. We don't exalt Christ, we exalt gifts, prophecy, interpretation. Paul would have loved this.

I haven't memorized it, I should do. It's written by a man called Brooke. It's pretty strong, I think.

It says, my goal is God himself. Not joy, not peace, not even blessing. My goal is God himself, not joy nor peace.

Not even blessing, but himself my God. It is his to lead me there, not mine, but his. At any cost, dear Lord, by any road.

So faith bounds forward to its goals in God. And love can trust her Lord to lead her there. Upheld by him my soul is following hard.

Till God hath full fulfilled my earnest prayer. No matter if the way be sometimes dark. No matter though the cost be often great.

He knoweth how I best shall reach the goal, the mark. The way that leads to him must needs be straight. One thing I know I cannot say him nay.

One thing I do I press toward my Lord. My God, my glory here from day to day. And in the glory there my great reward.

I usually ask a congregation somewhere, particularly when I go to a new place. As I did last week to some hundreds of preachers and other people. Did you come here tonight to meet God? 99% of people in America do not go to church to meet God.

Not in England, they go to hear a sermon about him. They don't expect a divine invasion. They don't expect a confrontation.

They don't expect the word to become a mirror. And I see all the corruption in my nature. And before an altar call I scream and say I'm corrupt.

Woe is me, I'm undone. Remember that man didn't say, Isaiah didn't say, Lord I need a bit of help. I'm a bit weak, give me a bit of help.

Lord, I need a bit of courage for a job. Lord, I'm behind in my tithing. He said two desperate things that bring personal revival.

I am undone and I'm unclean. And when you get there brother, you're serious with God. Then he starts doing some surgery.

And it's desperate, but it's desperately needed in this awesome hour in which we live. I'm going to skip into this again, Philippians. So what does he say? He's been asking for prayer, but listen to what he says again.

That Christ may be magnified in my body. He doesn't say, Lord make me a more attractive minister. Don't give me a deeper ministry.

Don't give me more miracles. Don't make me a star person, God in heaven. I used to covet that at one time.

There's a competition amongst preachers and I was foolish enough to fall into it. But there came a day when, boy, all that went. I couldn't care less what people think or say.

He says that Christ may be magnified in my body. He's not passing an opinion here. He's declaring a principle that must take place in his life.

Let's say here, verses 20 to 21. He says that Christ may be magnified by my body, whether by life or by death. He says for me to live is Christ and to die is gain.

But listen, it's only gain to die if you die in Christ. It's hell if you don't. You've got to be living right up to every bit of light you've got.

As I've told you before, I want to be in that position with God that without a second's notice, he can transfer me from here to heaven without me being an embarrassment to him when I get there. I'm supposed to be made for his praise. I'm supposed to be pure in heart.

I'm supposed to have rejected every other vile affection, every other thing which would contaminate my life. And that's how we have to live anyhow. We're not going to get a notice, most of us, that we're going to die.

You know, people say, I believe Jesus may come today. I say, you're lying. Oh, that's a rough thing to say.

I say, if you believed Jesus would come before 12 o'clock tonight, you'd make a dozen telephone calls. You'd do this, you'd do that, you'd do the other. You'd level your own life out.

You'll be asking God to do it. You go do it yourself. The scripture says, keep yourself in the love of God.

There are so many commandments. Read Hebrews, let us, let us, let us. You know, we sing, Jesus paid it all.

That's not true. In blood redemption, yes, but there are things I have to do. I have to put off the old man.

I have to put on the new man. I have to renounce this world, all of its pleasures, its pomp and its pride. Give me but Jesus, my Lord, crucified.

So let's say this then here. Verse 20 and 21. I call this Paul's purpose.

In Galatians 2.20, you remember, he says, I'm crucified with Christ. I live, not I, but Christ lives. And the life which I now live in the flesh.

You sit down and contemplate that for ten minutes tomorrow. The life which I now live in the flesh, which could go like that. Who's the richest man in this meeting tonight? There isn't one.

All any of us possess is one beat of the heart. You can't store them up and say, I'm going to breathe and... Mercy, you can't do it. But we live as though, you know, anybody's going to die, but not me.

Oh, some other day, maybe, when I get old. You know, the thing that kind of grieves me is this. When this fellow wrote this epistle, he wrote 14, if you give him Hebrews, and I give him Hebrews, I think he wrote it.

But that guy, dear, that guy, I'm getting so Americanized. I mean, this preacher, he wasn't much more than half of my age when he wrote these epistles. I'm much older than he was, but my goodness, he was a

million miles up the road spiritually compared with me.

It's not how long, we're not going to be rewarded for how long we've lived. If we are, God isn't just. David Brainerd, one of the greatest saints in America, died at 28.

Wesley died at 88. Who gets the biggest reward? The man who died at 88 or the one who died at 28? No, no, no, no. We're rewarded for faithfulness, not for years.

We're rewarded for obedience. We're not rewarded for achievements necessarily. To whom much is given, God will expect much.

You say you have more knowledge of the Bible, so what? You'll be in more trouble when you get to the judgment bar. You have this talent, you have that talent, the other. You know, you say about a lady, this dear lady that's praying for us tonight, she has a talent.

That's not a talent, that's a gift. In the Bible, talents are always related to money, silver talents and golden talents. And we'll be responsible for those as well.

Do you want to look at Romans 1.14? I know you know it well enough, but let's check it for a moment. I am debtor both to the Greeks and to the barbarians, to the wise and unto the unwise. So do you wonder, he says in another place, woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel.

This man has a passion of a hundred men. This man wasn't filled with the Spirit at some junction twenty years ago. The Hebrew, the Greek there anyhow says, be being filled with the Spirit, not just get filled up.

There are thousands of Pentecostals and wholeness people who are filled with the Holy Ghost. They've been leaking ever since it got filled. But there has to be a constant inflow that there may be an overflow and an outflow.

If you keep a cup under water and the water is dripping down, the cup will fill, it will go over and then it will go out. And if you live in complete subjection to the Lord, the Spirit will fill us. I saw a man write on a board recently a lot of things, get this out of your heart, pride, anger, jealousy, suspicion, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah.

And I said, brother, I didn't say it to him, he was preaching. I said in my heart, you don't remember, how do you remember all those things? You don't. You just let the Holy Ghost come, and there's an old hymn that says, Our blessed Redeemer, ere he breathed his tender last farewell, A guide, a comforter bequeathed with us to dwell.

He came sweet influence to impart, a gracious, willing guest. And you know what that word ghost, ghost, Holy Ghost, the word ghost is a corruption of the word guest. He comes as a guest, how long does your guest stay? Until they tell him to go.

He comes as a guest, and if you greet him, he goes. But we live, we do the actions, we know the vocabulary, we say the same things, we have the same terms. We gesticulate, we stress, dear God help us.

But he says, he goes on to say in the hymn, Every virtue we possess, and every conquest won, and every thought of holiness, are his alone. Are his alone. What's the quotation over there, Martha? Pardon? I know dear, but how does it start? Well the middle of it says, he checks each thought, and calms each fear, and

speaks of heaven.

The Holy Ghost is my inward monitor, and he tells me, that's wrong, stop right here. Or go ahead, that's right. I need that inward presence of the spirit of the living God, to be my constant monitor, constant ruler.

But if he says I'm a debtor, do you wonder that he sweats, and he toils, and he works? There's nothing can move him. Boy, I love that statement he makes. Let's say, well his purpose was, in the first chapter, 20 to 21, he talks about dying.

Romans 1, 14 is his passion. As I've said before, preaching is not a profession, God help us. Preaching is an obsession, and a passion.

And I love this passionate preacher. How he preaches his heart out, he weeps. A preacher that doesn't weep should be fired.

I have a little slip, I put it in letters. If your preacher doesn't weep over the pew, organize something in the pew to weep over the preacher. Jesus wept, Paul wept.

You see, we're so ready made. I fear to hear people have just sent it into a blessing, so they think that means you resign your job and go preaching. And they don't have no experience.

I don't believe any man should enter the pulpit until 10 years after he's been saved or filled with the spirit. Somebody wrote to me, oh I've got to get out, I'm young. I said, listen, Jesus is young, and God kept him brushing shavings off his legs at the end of every day for 30 years.

The Son of God took 30 years training. John Baptist was 30 years with the wild beasts. Moses, a colossal intellect.

Read Romans, read Acts chapter 7. He was mighty in word and in deed. Before ever he was, God got all of him, he was a statesman. He made the laws of the country.

And yet God takes him to the backside of the desert. James reminded me the other day, in with a friend. He said, well you're 80 now.

He said, well that's just the time Moses started preaching. Well I'm hoping to get started soon. Most folk are hoping I'll stop.

But no. 40 years. You can't preach out of the Bible merely.

You have to have experiences to get in your blood. No man has a right to stand up and dictate unless he's gone through the trial. I can listen to this man, he's been in prison.

In fasting, in weakness, in weariness. And yet there's nothing that's able to pull him down. His purpose then was what? That Christ might be magnified.

His passion was what? That he's a debtor. Again I say, preaching is an obsession and a passion. If a thing doesn't burn in me, it won't burn in you.

I'm not going to stand up and give. Most preachers don't preach anyhow. Now some of you guys, how many of you want to be preachers, like to be preachers? Put up your hands, let me see you.

I'll tell you what to do. Eat as little as you can. Oh good, that's encouraging.

Jacob put his hand up, I've been praying he'd want to become a preacher. Here's my plan for you. Eat as little as you can.

Sleep as little as you can. Pray and fast. Pray and study as much as you can.

I preached a sermon last Friday night, I preached for 50 years, preached it all over the world. But it has to be reborn in me, otherwise it does no good. I've got to go in that with a fire in my, not in my belly, but in my heart.

If I don't burn, why should you burn? If I don't weep, why should you weep? If I'm not willing to pay the price, why should I ask you? The last thing I want to be is a hypocrite anyhow. But look at this strange man. We've talked about his purpose, we've talked about his passion.

Let's talk about his pleasure in 2 Corinthians 12. Where's that? Here somewhere. Did he get ahead of me? Is it 2 Corinthians 12, 9 and 10? Oh, I've got the wrong chapter, I must have.

We've talked about his what? His purpose, his to preach. We've talked about his passion, being a debtor to everybody. We talk about his pleasure.

Of course he had pleasure. See if you'd like it. In verse 9, 2 Corinthians 12, verse 9. He said unto me, my grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in what? You know, when somebody asked that marvelous man that broke open China, Hudson Taylor.

Why did God take you of all the people? There are thousands of people at Keswick Convention, other conventions in England. Thousands of great Bible expositors. Why did he take you? And he smiled, he said, friend, you know what? God had been looking years for a man weak enough to acknowledge his weakness and his nothingness and cast himself on God.

And then he took me and used me. And he founded the empire of Jesus in China. Why doesn't the scripture say it's the lame that take the prey? You see somebody limping, you wouldn't think they were much good.

God says the lame take the prey. And to those who have no might, he increases strength. But the next part is my joy here.

Most gladly therefore, he says, I would rather glory in my infirmities. Come on. We go in the healing line.

Some people would never have done the things they've done if God had healed them. They survived. I've been healed many times.

I thank God for it. I've been in the valley of the shadow of death two or three times. God raised me up.

They threw a white sheet over me in hospital and said it'll be gone in four minutes. I knocked the sheet away and said, Oh, I didn't know you were listening. I said, well, you happen to be talking about me.

I said, I'm not going to die. I jumped out of that burning hotel before I hit the ground. The Lord said, I shall not die but live.

Four o'clock in the morning, the doctor chose at the bottom of my bed, scared and white, and I was all blood and smoke after the fire. And I said, I got another promise. What is it? First was, I shall not die but live.

And the second was, as for God, his ways are perfect. So the greatest preachers in America came to see me, precious guys. I'm going through this town.

I wanted to see you. Amazing how many of them. One of the most outstanding broadcasting preachers in America that day, I mean, I preached in his tabernacle some months before.

He said, Brother Raymond, you know what? God couldn't trust me with this. Did you ever think when you're going through the hottest, toughest spot in your life, he's trusting you? He's not trying to find out what's in you. He knows.

You don't know what's in you. You make your vows. I'll do this.

I'll do that. I'll do the other. How many of us have gone to conferences? From this day, I'm going to pray two hours a day.

From this day, I'm going to do that. From this day, I'm going to do the other. Good Lord, the highway of Christian living is covered with a wreckage of vows that have never been kept.

When it gets better, he says, I rather glory in my infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Again, he's not asking for miracles. He's asking for the indwelling spirit of God to become more intense that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

Therefore, I take pleasure. Come on now. What do you take pleasure in? Dominos or golf or what? Huh? I take pleasure.

I drink of the cup he passed, and I never ask why. I don't think Paul in his life ever asked why. When he was smitten down on the Damascus Road, he didn't say why, he said what.

What's it all about, Lord? Tell me. Lay the price down. Tell me.

He says, therefore, I take pleasure in infirmities, necessities, and persecutions and distresses for Christ's sake. For when I'm weak, then am I strong. Isn't that a paradox? Well, the whole Christian truth is a paradox.

It says if you want to go up, go down. If you go up, we'll humble you. If you go down, we'll exalt you.

If you want something, be nothing. Exchange your weakness for his strength, your emptiness for his fullness, that Christ may be magnified. I love that.

Look at verse 27 in the first chapter. This is a pattern he offers to the Philippians, a pattern. We're staying with that letter P. We talked about this.

All the other things, anyhow. Verse 27. Only let your conversation, but that is not speaking.

The word there is citizenship. Remember elsewhere he says our citizenship is in heaven, but it says in the Authorized Version our conversation is in heaven. I like what Paul's been saying.

I don't know how much you've heard of what he said. But what he said, we ought to live on earth as though we're already in heaven. The principles of a holy kingdom should be operating in us now in this flesh.

I read today of a missionary to the Buddhists, and a lovely little boy came. I remember seeing some of them in some country, Bangkok. Little boys in yellow robes, their hair all shaved off.

This little fellow came up to the new missionary. He said, you're a new missionary? He said, yes. You were going to talk about that lovely man Jesus, that healed people, and he was kind, and he said you're not to do evil things, and he said you're to be pure in heart, and he said you love your enemies, and so on.

Yes, yes. He said, well, sir, that's very nice, but there have been lots of missionaries here that talk about him, but I've never seen anybody like him. He rocked the missionary back on his heels.

Am I just here to tell him go that way, don't do this, don't do that, fear this, fear the other? He said, immediately I realized I'm there to be a role model for that child. He's going to watch me, and I don't want to betray my Lord by some stupid thing, my flesh getting in, my desires getting in. So in verse 27, I said this is a pattern, only let your style of life be as it becometh the gospel of Christ.

Whether I come and see you or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in the spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel. And then he says, and this is our privilege, unto it is given on behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his namesake. Let's go to chapter 4, verses 6 and 8. This is pretty tough stuff, isn't it? As I've said so often, one day somebody's going to read the Bible and believe it, and when they do, we'll all be embarrassed.

And yet Paul says, we are to be living epistles, read and known of all men. That's a modern song that says they're not reading the Bible, they're reading your life and mine. But in chapter 4, he says in verse 5, let your moderation be known unto all men, the Lord is at hand.

Now look at this, this is something, isn't it? Be careful for nothing, but be thankful for everything. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep or garrison your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ our Lord. Notice he begins chapter 3 with finally, my brethren.

Notice in chapter 4, verse 8, he says finally, my brethren. So don't you come chasing me because I keep saying finally, I've gone a bit longer. I borrowed that from Paul, that's my excuse.

Let me look here a minute. Let me say here, keep it in the letter P, this is the pursuit of the apostle. In chapter 3, there'd been a sell-out in his life because he said in verse 8, I count all things for loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord to whom I've suffered the loss of all things.

Not some things, all things. He'd lost the rights in his family, he'd lost the rights in the synagogue, he'd lost the rights in the school where he sat under Gamaliel, the most brilliant scholar ever. And then he says again in verse 24, our conversation, our lifestyle in heaven from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now this is what, what he's pursuing. This is the prize. This is what you get for your war.

This is what you get for your sacrifice. This is what you get because you're persuaded that Christ is the only one who is able to save and deliver. And he says he shall change our vile body that it may be

fashioned like unto his glorious body.

According as he is able to subdue all things. Now let's go to verse 8 in this same chapter. Finally my brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue and if there be any praise, think on these things.

Now when we go through his life story you see his travel and his travail, his tortured, his tried, his tempted, his jailed with a minimum of creature comfort and he comes out on top. And people in the palace are hearing about this man. They whip him and he won't whine.

They lash him and he doesn't complain. They starve him almost and yet he's no murmuring in him at all. He takes the very disposition of Jesus Christ and any adversity and calamity and tragedy in his life and he comes out more than conqueror.

You know we think he's a kind of a superstar. No, this is a normal Christian life. The normal Christian life for those professed to walk in the spirit.

I think the most dangerous thing in the world is to say I walk in the spirit. I make myself vulnerable to every attack the devil has. But we can be more than conquerors in the whole thing.

There's no question about that at all. He says I glory in tribulation, in necessities, in reproaches. Isn't that something? Let me say the last thing.

I like his word when he says none of these things move me. Isn't that great? I've forgotten where he said that but I know he said it. None of these things move me.

It's poise. The presence of the living Christ keeps him balanced in everything. None of these things.

What have they been saying? They've been telling him that before he gets far up the road he's going to be a boy. And he says none of these things. Oh mercy, we'd be on the fall with the pastor.

Could you call a prayer council? I'm going to be persecuted. I could lose my life. You've been seeing when we all get to heaven for ten years but as soon as you get there you want to turn back.

Not this way Lord. Don't chop my head off. Don't let me suffer.

You know what? One of the cheating devilish things of our day when I was a boy and Dale remembers this too when he was a boy. Betty doesn't because she never was a boy but anyhow. Maybe she remembers it in the days.

The pastor would say at the Sunday service you know I've had a good time visiting hospitals this week. I've been in six different hospitals. I led eight people to Christ.

Eight people had a deathbed repentance and I went to see them two days after and they have no deathbed repentance now. We sent people straight into eternity with injections. We drug them two or three days before they die.

You can have a chance to speak to them. They feel hell straight out of bed into a hell like that. You know we're not at least I'm not as I should be.

I'd love to have ten percent of the passion this man had or vision or compassion or driving force but he isn't a showman. He isn't competing with anybody. I want this to be done.

He says that Christ may be magnified in my body whether I live or I die. I think he would have enjoyed the hymn that was sung so often and written of course by Isaac Watts when I survey the wondrous cross. When he says my richest gain I count but loss and poor contentment and all my pride.

All things were an advantage to me. My scholarship again I was a tribe of Benjamin the seed of Abraham a Pharisee of the Pharisees a scholar in the school of Gamaliel everything going for me. He bundled it all and becomes offensive.

It's just like a bunch of dung as far as I'm concerned. In order that I may see him in all his true value in all his true power. You know I've kept thinking this last few days I'm trying to write this book on the judgment seat of you know I feel so shrunk and how do you feel at the side of a man like this? Not because he has a magnificent intellect because of his relationship because he says there was a time when I was crucified with Christ he went to the cross that's not the problem he didn't get people to the cross he was getting them on the cross.

And he says he revealed himself to me on the Damascus road later he revealed himself in me. People don't care a hell of beans whether you speak in tongues and heal the sick if your life doesn't conform to the Bible people say well you can't do this you can't do that I'll tell you the man who knows what the standard of Christianity is better than anybody else the man in the gutter the man in the street the man in the factory seen so much hypocrisy so much emptiness so much talk but they know the genuine person when they see them when the love of Christ is constraining them.

This is the man who says you can do all things not so he loves that little word all things without murmurings and without disputings all things however offensive however against your taste I don't believe Jesus liked lepers he did more than like them he loved them and it's difficult to get away from some of our affections we kept seeing Martha and I talking about a hymn this week have thine affections been nailed to the cross I was in a meeting not long ago a guy came up gave me a bear hug he said brother I love you I said you what?

I love you nonsense he doesn't know me how can he love me a lot of this sloppy mush going into a church give everybody a hug there's nothing in it love has blood on it love has sacrifice in it you cannot have love without sacrifice you cannot have love without blood and this man loved he says God loved the world Christ loved the church but he loved me and gave himself for me and so he goes after all the barbarian the Greek the Scythian the bond the free it matters not I'm a debtor to that man to tell him that while he's a leper there's one who can heal him and cleanse him from his moral leprosy there's one who can save to the uttermost not merely cancel your past sins but he can take the root of sin out of you it doesn't mean you never sin again it means that you live in victory you see lots of people get the devil out of them but they don't let the spirit in and they become seven times worse I've seen people who backslid who've had a worse vocabulary after they were backslidden than ever they had before it why? because another spirit's come in the Holy Ghost is not in dwelling he's not in control but here's a man who's mastered by his master here's a man who is a slave he says I'm the bond servant of Jesus Christ he won't give the devil credit anywhere he never once says I'm in prison because of the devil he says I'm and he doesn't say I'm in prison because of Caesar he says I'm the prisoner of Jesus Christ he didn't write Romans 8 28 as a kind of nice bit of poetry he said all things work together I'm in this stinking prison God's going to get glory out

of this there's no way of getting into the palace but he got into the palace he's not in person they said we've never had a prisoner like this and all the palace was talking about him that's what he says in this first chapter and then the fourth chapter again he says there that there were saints in Caesar's household well how did they get there?

Paul was the one that went and rejoiced that he lost everything to gain everything he says you can't lose in this life if I live I gain because I have Christ in me if I die I gain I win whichever way I'm tossing up with a coin with two heads on it you can't lose in this game God doesn't reward us here he rewards us hereafter well I know some of you wonderful preacher fellows you've got it all fixed out I haven't I'm sure you'd be very happy to stand at the judgment seat right after Paul wouldn't you?

I've talked about his preaching I've talked about his passion what about his praying?

I'm not concerned whether a man teaches 50 people on Sunday or 5,000 no man is greater than his prayer life I don't care who he is I've told that to hundreds of preachers twice this year I've talked to five or six hundred at a time no man is greater than his prayer life and Paul is not only the prince of preachers he's the prince of prayers doesn't he say in the ninth chapter I could wish myself a curse for my brethren I'm willing to be rejected cut off one translator says he says look I'm willing to be damned if need be Madame Guillaume said this I've so reveled in the beauty of Christ in the glory of Christ in the sweetness of Christ in the majesty of Christ on earth that if there's no room in heaven well put me out and let me go to hell she said I'll enjoy hell all that I've had in

this life the memories in hell will outdo I don't think she was right I know what she means my love is so great I'm so soaked in him come on now I know you're talking about do you walk in the spirit do you think in the spirit it says this body if we go into the second chapter I've skipped some things there it says let this mind be in you that's part of your body we don't have the old fashioned watches like we had when we were youngsters it used to be like turnips big things you know and you open them and good night there were more wheels in there than you've ever seen in your life and you go to the watchman and say my watch needs some help and you take the cover off and you see all these wheels there when I give the man my watch I give him the works I give him the hands I give him

everything and he says he wants your body which contains your will contains your emotions contains your intellect but he says let this mind be in you you see why this blessed man overcame he had the mind of Christ he says let this mind be in you and he knew it himself he says writing to the Romans chapter 6 the love of Christ constrains me you see all self had been removed and he's Christ centered he has a heart of love he has the heart of God he has the will of God he has the mind of God and that's normal Christian living I don't like to make a tirade against TV but I'm quite sure it's robbed thousands of people of hours they should have spent in fact women used to get together for coffee and talk in the morning they don't now they watch a TV show and get second hand kicks but if you're

going to walk in the spirit you must read the word you must have the wisdom from the word you must have the spirit to inspire the word you see as I say I'm embarrassed when I think of my terrible limitations I know so little I've done so little for God I'm challenged again by this man this week with one page of the Bible that's been going through Siberia in terrible poverty and hunger and everywhere he goes he's radiating blessing I told you about Solzhenitsyn the other day lying on a bed of rotting straw in a concentration camp and he found God because a man across there in the stink and the urine was taking little papers out of his ragged clothes and uncurling them and reading them and relaxing and he said they put burdens on that

man greater than anybody else they made him suffer they

gave him intense privation and he didn't crack under it he never whined he radiated something and I said well hey what is it what are those bits of paper he said they're the promises of God I stuffed them in my clothes and I put them back carefully every night and he said that man walked about that camp there were three thousand men there and he was the most prominent man in the whole group there were doctors philosophers lawyers politicians but this man was a marked one he bore something of the we say Lord we have borne the image of the earthly so long we need to bear the image of the heavenly you know Paul doesn't say wait till you die he says I want the glory of God in my life now the life which I now live in the flesh I should live as though I were already wired up to a wire the world

doesn't see and that pulsates into my life his love his compassion his grace his joy his peace and his power God never intended we should be spiritual cripples he never intended the church should be where it is now but there's going to be an awakening I'm absolutely sure of that well now I'd like to preach another hour but I won't let's sing a verse and if you have to leave you can leave let's sing there is a fountain filled with blood as we go to our knees there is a fountain

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