

Do Not Settle for Less Than God's Very Best

by Peter Hammond

Do not settle for less than God's very best, but instead seek His way wholeheartedly and surrender to His Lordship.

Duration: 24:44

Scripture: Ephesians 3:14

Topics: "Christian Life"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of actively living out the Great Commission rather than passively believing in it. He criticizes the idea that sitting on the couch and watching TV can fulfill God's mission. The speaker uses examples like an obstacle course and a computer game to illustrate the difference between real-life experiences and mere simulations. He argues that the Bible describes the Christian journey as a continuous struggle and advancement, and that concepts like just believing or receiving are inadequate in conveying the true message of salvation.

Transcript

Do not settle for less than God's very best. Ephesians chapter 3 from verse 14 to 21. Let's start reading now from verse 21.

Ephesians chapter 3 starting at verse 14. For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might through his Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height, to know the love of Christ, which passes knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations for ever and ever.

Amen. This is the Word of God. Are you one of those many Christians in a spiritual drought, in a spiritual desert, in a spiritual wilderness? Are you frustrated and bewildered by an emptiness and a dissatisfaction with your life and with your faith? Are you crying out for something more, something that will fill that empty feeling with deep peace of mind and heart and a genuine capacity for and genuine experience of love, of God's love? Do you find it necessary to put up a false front in front of other Christians, pretending to be what you are not? Do you pretend to have the peace and joy that your soul knows nothing about?

Sometimes you may think that you are the only person in the world having such a frustratingly empty experience.

And you can't tell just how many other Christians are hiding behind a false front, hiding their hurts and their needs and their experience behind a mask. The tragic situation is actually robbing many of the true joy, of the deep peace, of the real love, that the Christian life is actually meant to be. The root of this problem is the shallow experience and the superficial message proclaimed by all too many Christian groups today.

In Australia, when I was there two years ago, I was told by the Christians there that one of the worst things that has happened to Sydney, which used to have such a strong, dynamic Christian community, in fact, from where Bishop Stephen Bradley came from, who planted so many churches in South Africa, South-West African religion, Bishop Stephen Bradley came from the Sydney diocese. He studied at Moor College there, and I was taken to this place where Stephen Bradley was a young student, this was before the Second World War time, and in Australia then, they weren't as sloppy as they are now, the men were expected to come in tie and jacket for every lecture at college, and they didn't have air conditioning in the 1930s, and here's an upper gallery which was even hotter in the lecture hall, and Stephen Bradley apparently took his jacket off, and the lecturer stopped immediately and said, Mr. Bradley, will you get dressed? And wouldn't continue until he had put his jacket back on. Now that was in Australia, Sydney.

But Sydney diocese used to produce and send out some of the finest missionaries around, as witnessed in Stephen Bradley. But they said, Hillsong has rotted the soul of Sydney and Australia, but not much of the church. I had Christians in Australia saying, they've got the wrong vowel.

It shouldn't be an I, it should be an E. Speaking about Hillsong. And they referred to it regularly as Hellsong, because of the shallow, superficial, man-centered nonsense that goes on there, and which is acceptable to me. In fact, I at one time went to a Christian youth group to pick up Calvin and walked in, and I thought, is this a nightclub or a church? What Calvin had to report about it was shocking.

What they do in the name of Christianity in some of these Hillsong places, and a lot of the music, it's mindless in many cases. And of course, the superficiality of the message preached and sung has unfortunately for many people, basically robbed them of real Christianity. And many times when we're on the streets and we're witnessing to people, you get people today who say what I never heard when I was first converted.

People used to be respectful of the gospel, but today you get a lot of people saying, I'm not interested. No, I tried Christianity, it didn't work. And when I've questioned them further, you get answers like, I didn't get my healing, I didn't keep my healing, I didn't get that job, I didn't get the race, I didn't win the lottery, literally, didn't win the lottery.

What gospel are you talking about? Many of these people have been inoculated against the real thing with a fake. And this shallow experience, this superficial message, this man-centered message proclaimed by all too many Christian groups today, has produced generations of people who think they've tried Christianity and it didn't work, and they never even understood what the gospel was. The shortcut message, the shortcut methods, the oversimplified formulas have just failed to work.

It's as though the devil himself has advocated another gospel. As Paul warns us in Galatians 1 verse 6-7, even if he or an angel from God should present you a different gospel, may he be anathema, may he be accursed, may he be condemned to hell, is what is written in Galatians 1 verse 6-9. Polluting the Christian

message, censoring its contents, confusing its issues.

The enemy, Satan, has produced the greatest message of all time, alternatively to a cheap, oversimplified formula, or to a dead, overcomplicated theology. And Christians, apparently unaware and ignorant of all these wiles of the devil, have accepted all too easily these corruptions of the gospel. You get into some of these churches and you'll hear them singing over and over and over, I'm blessed and I know that I am.

You ask me how I am, I'm blessed, I'm blessed, I'm blessed, I'm blessed, and I know that I am. And you go to people in those congregations and they might have their faces down, and how are you? I'm blessed. I mean, they're just pre-programmed to lie.

And they are taught to speak it into existence, to confess the healing even when they don't have the healing, which is teaching generations of Christians to lie. I'm healed, when they aren't healed. But by saying that, they've been taught that by lying, that God will reward their lie with actual healing, and so on.

And to speak it into existence, you have the power of life and death in the tongue. And this kind of, well, God can speak something into existence, but we can't. The news flashes, we are not God, and yet there's a whole lot of people teaching that we are.

If you watch the American Gospel, or Call for the Servant, or Clouds Without Water, Justin Peters, he exposed it, he actually sees these false teachers standing up and saying, we are little gods, and I don't just have a god within me, I am one, and things like this. And God's words in my mouth are as powerful as God's words in his own mouth, and other blasphemous nonsense. The mindless thing said.

And then you get these cheap, simple, oversimplified messages. He who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. Have you called? Yes, I've called.

Then you're saved. Or, he who believes has eternal life. Have you believed? Yes, I have.

Then you're saved. And the unforgivable sin is to question your salvation. But there's a lot in the Bible to have us to test and to question.

We should question our motives, and to see that we are built on the rock-solid foundation of Christ's name. God loves you. There's a wonderful plan for your life.

Just believe. Just raise your hand. Just come forward.

How do you know that you're saved? I raised my hand. I went forward. I was baptized.

I was confirmed. And so, for many people, this is the Gospel. A cheap, oversimplified formula, or a technical salvation that's all theory and no experience.

It's ridiculous. It leads to a dead theology and a lack of reality, a lack of understanding of the real truth. When I was converted, one of the first books I came across was called Hunger for Reality.

It was first called Coming of Day, and later it was republished under Hunger for Reality, written by George Berber. And it resonated with me. A hunger for reality, a dissatisfaction with the fake and the fraud, and anything that was less than Bible-based, Christ-centered, book-and-axe Christianity.

This idea that a once-for-all token gesture of commitment can be sufficient to effect eternal salvation in a form that is to invite utter delusion. How many people have raised their hand, gone forward at a crusade, got baptized, been confirmed, and not been right with God, and haven't had a real relation, and haven't been regenerated? All of these concepts are unworthy of our great God. They're hopelessly inadequate in conveying the biblical message.

God gave us the whole Bible. He didn't just give us the four spiritual laws. The four spiritual laws will not promote true spiritual life and deep inner spiritual satisfaction and fulfillment.

The devil has a counterfeit for everything the Lord offers. He has false fruit to offer. It's not the real thing, although it looks the same.

We used to have a bowl of plastic fruit for some reason, and somebody gave us some additional. I remember counseling somebody then, a person after, saying, May I have one of these to eat? And I said, Well, you could try, but it would taste awful. It's plastic.

They're like, What? Really? But sometimes plastic fruit looks more real than the real thing. But if you bite into it, you discover this is not the real thing at all. It's plastic.

It does not give deep peace of heart and mind. Real joy. True love.

It's plastic. And there's a lot of plastic Christianity out there right now. Styrofoam, even.

Now why is it that so many who try the counterfeit products and taste its synthetic flavor, like that which is offered by God TV, Faith Broadcasting Network, TVN, and a host of other mainstream broadcasters, why don't they try to hide their disappointment, thinking that perhaps it's all that the Lord has to give them? How can they even think that God's ways are unsatisfying? It's not possible that the creator of the universe could dish up this kind of dissatisfying, unworkable nonsense. And yet many people think, That's what I've got to believe. Or I could commit the unforgivable sin of doubting my salvation because I did raise my hand or something like that.

If the way is disappointing, it's not God's way. If the fruit is unsatisfying, it's not God's fruit. You're barking up the wrong tree.

God's way is not easy, but it is fulfilling. God's way is not cheap, but it is the best. God's way is not trouble-free, but it is the way of peace of heart and mind.

God's way is not all blessings, but it is all joy. There's a difference between happiness and joy. You can be happy because you won a race, you passed your exams, you got a prize, but joy is in spite of circumstances.

You can have joy in prison. You can have joy while sick. You can have joy despite the worst of circumstances.

J-O-W. Jesus first, others next, you last. Or Jesus and you with zero between you.

Nothing separating you. Joy. If you are content with a superficial, lukewarm, stagnant, decayed, defeated, mundane, mediocre existence, then God cannot give you a deep, on fire, overflowing, fulfilling, victorious, supernatural life.

By settling for less, we rob ourselves of the very best. Good can be the biggest enemy of best. Sometimes we're involved with something that's good, but it's not God, it's not the best.

The Lord cannot give us the best if we settle for less. Good is the main enemy of the best. If you are content with your present spiritual state, then the Lord can do no more for you.

Complacency is the deadly enemy of spiritual progress and growth and advancement. The trouble is all too many have settled for second-rate, degenerate form of spiritual life. Hellsong.

Purpose-driven life. Sinner-friendly, willow-creek, saddleback type of prayer-jabbers, spineless, lukewarm, even jellyfish, who are missing the real God-centered, Bible-based, Christ-centered, Holy Spirit-led Christianity of the Book of Acts. To too many people, Jesus is not really Lord, he's merely the constitutional monarch of their religious convictions.

Just like the Queen of England is called sovereign, but she's not meant to get involved in political or controversial affairs. Well, Jesus doesn't work like that. He is a sovereign Lord of Lords and King of Kings.

His word goes. And the idea that you can have a monarch who doesn't interfere in your personal decisions is not acceptable. Not to the Heavenly King, the Creator, the Eternal Judge, the Sovereign Lord.

And to many people they've made Jesus the impersonal figurehead of their religious convictions. But how they govern their lives, how they make their decisions, is strictly their business. You want his help, but you don't want his interference.

Jesus can save me by all means. He can answer my prayers, yes, certainly, but he must not tell me what career to choose, what friends to have, what clothes to buy, what kind of language to use, what kind of life to live, what kind of books to read, what to do with my time, my money, my energy. He must not tell me what to spend my money or my time on.

You do not really believe the truth that God gives the very best to those who leave the choice to him. You feel that God is trying to cheat you out of pleasure. You feel that you know better than God.

You seem to have a superficial commitment then. You've settled for the counterfeit, and you're missing out on the real thing. You let the label fool you.

And now you're wondering why you're not fulfilled and not satisfied and not living in victory. The truth is you cannot expect maximum blessing from minimum commitment. Too much is given, much will be required.

Too much more is given, much more is required. Freely received, freely, freely given. We are saved to serve.

We are blessed not to be a blessing. There's no shortcut method. There's no four-point program.

There's no cut and dry can of salvation. There's no substitute for full surrender to the Lordship of Christ. Wholeheartedly seeking and following God's way.

You will seek me and you will find me when you search me with all your heart, says the Lord. You have to forsake the world. That's what it means to take up your cross.

A cross is not meant just to be an ornament that we wear on a lapel, or as a necklace or a bumper sticker. The cross is a symbol of death. I've decided to follow Jesus, taking up the cross, dying to the world, forsaking the world.

It's not just a signpost to redirect us down this left or right path. The cross was used to end a life. To be born again symbolized dying, buried with Christ in baptism, raised with Christ in the innocence of life.

That's what it symbolizes. Dying to the world, being born again to new life in Christ. There is no substitute to giving up living for selfish reasons and motivations.

We must repent of our past sinful ways, our wasteful ways, and then put all our energies and time and strength and talents and money and abilities under God's control to live fully firm with all we've got. You give Him everything. You give up your sins and your strengths, your lusts and your loves, your ambitions and your failures, your talents and your wasteful opportunities, your abilities and your hurts, the good and the bad, you give it all up to Him.

And God, in exchange, gives us forgiveness and eternal life, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, self-control, guidance and opportunities and fulfillment and companionship and direction and meaning and purpose in life. We are justified, fully forgiven from all our sins. We are adopted into the family of God.

We are enrolled into the army of God. You give up everything you have, and you gain everything God has for you. What a deal! Why would anyone settle for less than that? He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose.

There's a poem that was found in the Bible of a Confederate soldier. I asked for strength that I might achieve. I was weak, but I might learn humbly to obey.

I asked for health, that I might do greater things. I was given infirmity, that I might do better things. I asked for riches, that I might be happy.

I was given poverty, that I might be wise. I asked for power, that I might have the praise of men. I was given weakness, that I might feel the need of God.

I asked for all things, that I might enjoy life. I was given life, that I might enjoy all things. I got nothing that I asked for, but everything that I'd hoped for.

And despite myself, my unspoken prayers were answered. I'm amongst all men most richly blessed. That was found handwritten in the Bible, belongs to a Confederate soldier in the war between the states.

He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose. That was written by Jim Elliott, one of the five missionaries to the Orca, the five Wodani Indians in Ecuador. The way of salvation is described in the Bible as a search, a journey, a pilgrimage, a war, a contest.

Christians are described as pilgrims, disciples, soldiers, farmers, long distance runners. These are all biblical imagery of a Christian. And the Bible is full of words describing the Christian life as fighting, overcoming, advancing, conquering, struggling, suffering and succeeding.

Where then do we get this passive, just believe, just receive, let go, let God, just sit back, be lazy, just like TBM's advert, sit back, relax, switch on to God TV, knowing that you're playing a vital role in fulfilling God's

kingdom on earth. By being a couch potato? You're kidding. With a remote in your hand, that's how you're actually going to take dominion and fulfill the Great Commission? I'm sorry I didn't take a picture of that advert.

It was one of the most moronic adverts I've ever seen in my life. You make an excellent example of the kind of fake Christianity that many are settling for. Thinking it's like a man sitting in the stadium or in his armchair watching TV, feeling himself that he's a sportsman.

Watching a sports game doesn't make you a sportsman. It's like when Sean was doing a Sunday school lesson a while ago. He was speaking about the obstacle course and what the obstacle course taught us normally.

Teamwork. Speed. Agility.

All these different things that are involved in getting through the obstacle course and getting through it fast. And one kid in the Sunday school said, oh, I've got a computer game just like that. And he said, well, it's different in real life.

No, he said, it's exactly the same. So I was trying to explain, obstacle course in real life is different. You've got a backpack, you're slipping and sliding in the mud, and you're gripping onto the ropes.

Your hands are getting torn while you're trying to hold on to this rope and you're sliding down this rope while you're trying to get over the mud pool and over the barbed wire to reach this next thing and climb this. And, you know, your heart's pounding, your lungs are sweating, and you're slipping and sliding on your own sweat and the blood of other people who've also gotten injured in the obstacle course. And this chap kept saying, no, my computer game's exactly the same.

No, if anybody thinks that you can fulfill God's Great Commission by sitting on the couch and switching on to some moronic, imbecilic kind of TV program where they are normally preaching false gospels anywhere, that's not how we do it. We get in the streets. That's why our boots are laced up as our symbol of the Great Commission course.

The descriptions of salvation of the Bible are all speaking of progress and advancement and movement. They speak of a continuous, ongoing war, struggle, fight. Experience.

It's a way of life. Not a once-for-all token gesture of commitment or technical theory or mere theological education. As we say in EE, it's not just knowing something ahead, and it's not just temporary.

The heart of the gospel is a restored relationship with God through Jesus Christ. Where communication with God, where contact with our Saviour is established and maintained by daily quiet times, by studying the Bible, by reading the Bible, by praying through the Bible, by applying what we hear and learn in church and Bible study and through our daily devotional life and through our reading of Christian books and our fellowship with other Christians. And where we pray to God, where He speaks to us through the Word of God, where we reach out to believers in fellowship and to unbelievers in worship, I mean, that's the cross.

That's the vertical and the horizontal. The vertical, our relationship with God. He speaks to us through the Bible.

And just like we have two legs, so the Bible has two Testaments, the Old and the New Testament. Both are the Word of God together. And in prayer, like a bird, you can think bird has two wings, and prayer is prayer and praise.

Many people think of prayer as just asking, like a shopping list, demands, give me, give me, give me. But praise and thanksgiving and worship and adoration is a vital part of our prayer too. And in the horizontal side, our relationship with other people, fellowship with believers, witness and evangelism to other believers.

And all of this should be wrapped up in worship. That's a Christian life of discipleship where needs are met, where character is developed and formed and shaped, and eternal purposes are fulfilled. We need to realize that God has so very much more to teach us.

You need to know God has so much more for you to learn and to experience and to do and to accomplish. Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly, abundantly, above all that we ask or think according to the power that works in us, to Him be the glory, in the Church, by Christ Jesus, to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Solidary glory. Let's pray. Lord God, we want to thank you for who you are.

We want to thank you for what you've done. We want to praise you, Lord God, for the privilege we have of being your children, being your servants and soldiers, being your sons and daughters, being involved in your family and your work in fulfilling the Great Commission, seeking first your kingdom. Help us, Lord God, to be more faithful to your word, more effective in your service.

We pray it in Jesus' precious and holy name. Amen.

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