

Creation-Providence-Redemption - Part 4

by William MacDonald

William MacDonald explores the stark contrast between the kingdom of God and the world, emphasizing the importance of faith and the inevitability of persecution for believers.

Duration: 42:10

Scripture: Genesis 6:9, Isaiah 53:5, Matthew 5:11-12, John 16:33, Romans 6:14, Romans 8:1, Revelation 21:3

Topics: "Redemption"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of grace in the life of a believer. Grace is described as not only the means of salvation, but also the source of power and guidance for believers. The sermon also highlights the future rewards that believers can expect, including eternal life and being conformed to the image of Christ. The contrast between the blessings offered by the Lord and the offerings of the world is emphasized, with the world's offerings being seen as undesirable. The sermon concludes by mentioning the forgiveness of sins and the freedom it brings. The preacher also mentions the power of prayer and how it played a role in the downfall of the Soviet Union.

Transcript

I said, Eric, I never had a Cadillac. He said, wasn't that a Cadillac you were driving when I was there in California? I said, Eric, come on, what would people think of the author of True Discipleship drove around in a Cadillac? And he said, well, what do you have? I said, I have a Chevrolet. He said, well, I knew it began with C. You wonder what goes on behind the scenes, don't you? How people talk.

John chapter 17. Gospel of John chapter 17. And verse 13.

But now I come to you, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves. I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not pray that you should take them out of the world, but that you should keep them from the evil one.

They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them by your truth. Your word is truth.

As you sent me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth. We're speaking about two kingdoms, worlds apart.

And our purpose in speaking about this is to expose the world in its true colors as an inveterate enemy of God and of the people of God. We mentioned the two kingdoms yesterday. One is in the Bible called the world, and the other is the kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Worlds apart. The world is an evil empire, exactly what Reagan called the Soviet Union. An evil empire, concerned primarily with money, sex, and power.

The kingdom of our Lord is a holy empire, concerned with righteousness and peace and joy. It's a holy spirit. In many ways, the two become blurred in life in the United States today.

As we mentioned yesterday, one man said, I looked for the church and found it in the world. I looked for the world and found it in the church. But actually, the battle lines are being drawn.

The world is coming out in clearer colors than ever before, especially in its hostility to the empire, the kingdom of our Lord. So we want to continue with a study of some of the contrasts between these two kingdoms. While believers should be insulated from the world, as the Lord taught in this passage of scripture, they're not to be isolated from the world.

Scriptural separation does not require a monastic life. The Christian must live in the world, but he must not let the world live in him. Isaac Watts' hymn reminds us that this vile world is not a friend to help us on to God.

It's something that the people of his day realized. Sometimes I wonder if we realize it today. Actually, the world system is determined to wipe out every moral value that we as believers hold.

And we've seen that in the last few months in a very special way. And every divine principle for which we stand is under attack today from the world. There is a right of passage from the world system to the kingdom of our Lord, and that's known as the new birth.

When a person repents of his sins and receives the Lord Jesus Christ as his Savior, as his Lord and Savior, he passes over from one kingdom to the other. He has changed his ancestry. He has changed his citizenship.

He has changed his master. And he indicates that in the waters of baptism. When he goes down into the waters of baptism, he's taking himself off the ground of the world and placing himself on Christian ground.

And saying, in effect, I no longer belong to the world. I belong to Jesus Christ, and I stand for all that he stands for. It's just barely possible that somebody in the meeting today has never been baptized.

You profess to be a Christian. You profess to love the Lord Jesus. But you don't love him enough to go down into the waters of baptism.

I'd like to remind you, it's possible to go to heaven without being baptized. It's not a requisite of salvation. But if you do go to heaven that way, you will be unbaptized for all eternity.

In other words, there are some things you can do to obey the Lord down here that you won't be able to do up there. There are no baptismal fonts in heaven. No baptismal tanks in heaven.

The Presbyterians like to think that the river of the water of life will be there, and maybe they can use that for sprinkling. But there will be no baptisms in heaven. I think it's very interesting that oftentimes the

people of the world seem to understand the significance of baptism more than believers do.

Believers oftentimes wave it off with a shrug of the shoulders. The unsaved know what it stands for. And in many countries of the world today, you can profess faith in the Lord Jesus and go back to your family.

But the minute you take your place in the waters of baptism, the war begins. Persecution begins, and the battle is in game. Christians should not be shocked when they encounter the hatred of the world.

The Lord Jesus has given us plenty of warning concerning this. The New Testament is replete with warnings that we should expect hatred and animosity from the world. The Lord Jesus never promised us that our lives would be free from trouble, scorn, ridicule, even persecution.

On the contrary, he told us that we would have tribulation. In the world you shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer. I have overcome the world.

I want to tell you it's a spurious gospel that promises the believer the world's approving smile and a trouble-free existence. The world hates Christ, and it hates his followers, too. It's really interesting to me, even traveling on the plane, and engage the person next to you in conversation.

You can talk about political parties. They're very, very at ease when you do. You can talk about almost any subject, and they're comfortable.

You just mention the name of Christ, and they freeze on the spot. The conversation comes to a screeching halt, and they're silent the rest of the trip to the destination. We cannot really expect better treatment than the Lord Jesus had when he was here on earth.

As Spurgeon said, the world found a cross for the master, and it's doubtful it will award crowns to his disciples. You just mustn't expect that. The world loves its own.

That's interesting. It loves its own. The world knows who its own are, and it loves them and accepts them.

Those are the ones who toe the party line. But I want to tell you the world has nothing but contempt for those who refuse to be poured into its mold. That's why Paul warned us in Romans 12, 1 and 2, Don't let the world around you pour you into its mold.

This explains why there's so much anti-Christian bias on the radio and the TV today, and the movies. There's such a pronounced anti-Christian attitude around us in the world today, the radio and the press. Pat Buchanan said this.

He said, We live in an age where the ridicule of black is forbidden. It should be. Where anti-Semitism is punishable by political death.

But where Christian bashing is a popular indoor sport, and films mocking Jesus Christ are considered avant-garde. But it's absolutely true. And it's on the rise.

It's on the increase. And maybe that's why it's so pertinent that we should be speaking about that at the conference this year. David Hesselgrave adds, Despite the comfortable circumstances in which the majority of Christians find themselves, The sobering fact is that the 20th century has been characterized by a terrible outcropping of opposition to the cause and people of Christ.

Moreover, there are few signs of abatement on the horizon. We shouldn't expect it. Rather, there are many signs of an increased opposition directed especially to those involved in the spread of the Christian faith.

As we mentioned, the world is willing to dialogue on almost any subject. And the world can unite in its opposition, its enmity to Christ. Pharisees and Sadducees, Jews and Gentiles, Pilate and Herod find common ground in their opposition to the lovely Lord Jesus and to New Testament Christianity.

Many cities ban creches at Christmas time depicting the manger scene. But the federal government subsidizes art that portrays the Lord Jesus in the most blasphemous, so bad that I could not even mention it here in public today. Just think of that.

A manger scene, a harmless manger scene, forbidden in the public squares of our cities in the country today. And yet the National Association for the Endowment of the Arts or something subsidized by the federal government, and they will depict the Lord Jesus in settings that are absolutely impossible to describe it in a public audience. Lenin particularly hated seriously committed Christians.

He could endure, manage weak Christians. But serious Christians meant nothing but trouble for a Marxist-Leninist regime. They owed allegiance to the one power greater than the totalitarian communist state.

And history has borne out Lenin on this point, if not on others. Often when a person is first saved, he's so enthusiastic, so ecstatic, so bubbling with joy, that he knows immediately that whenever he shares this with his family, they're all going to get saved. Isn't that right? You expect all his unbelieving relatives and friends to trust Christ the first time they hear the gospel.

Instead of that, he runs into a hornet's nest of opposition. That's strange, isn't it? I have a friend who in his unconverted days was on dope. Heavy dope.

Alcohol. His life was torn apart by immorality. He was in one of the southern cities, and someone shared the gospel with him.

He was gloriously saved. He called his father up in Michigan. His father said, The front door is locked.

The barn door is closed. Don't come home. That was his reaction.

Now it was perfectly alright when he was on drugs and all the rest, but perfectly all wrong that he should accept the Lord Jesus as his savior. I have another friend, probably one of the closest friends in life to me. He was a wild young fellow.

Rammed around on a motorcycle that said hellbound on it. Had a picture of the devil with the pitchfork and the horns and the tail and all the rest. He was in trouble with the law for burglary.

He was on drugs. He was on alcohol. And really living a wild, wild life.

Mother of an unbeliever, perfectly alright. Perfectly alright. When he was going to high school, there was somebody who left chick tracts around.

And Eric used to read those tracts. He said, wow, I'd want to go to hell. But he didn't do anything about it.

Then he thought after a while he'd better straighten up his life, and he went off to a community college. And there was a girl there that used to ask him to come to a Bible study there. And he kept refusing, but one day he went.

And the day he went, Carl Knott was speaking. Carl's mother is with us today. Carl Knott was speaking.

He was speaking on the subject of hell. At the end of the meeting, another fellow got a hold of Eric and shared the gospel again with him, and Eric got saved. His mother had another son and a daughter, both living in sin.

She wouldn't say a thing against them. All she could do was nag, nag, nag Eric. If I ever said anything complimentary about Eric, she'd just come back with something negative.

Yeah, but he never went to college. Something like that. He met the hostility of his own family.

Never mind. He's serving the Lord down in Curitiba, Brazil today. I should probably tell you the rest of the story.

That motorcycle that he had was really a classic. He used to take it to shows, and he had a fiberglass board giving all the specifications of this motorcycle. And after he got saved, he went down to Mexico on a little gospel crusade.

And one day he said to Jim McCarthy, you know, it's funny, he said, I prayed, but I haven't been able to sell the motorcycle. And Jim said, well, Eric, now that you're saved, would you sell a motorcycle with the word hellbound on it? Word hellbound on it? Eric said, I never thought of that. He came home, and he went to work on the paint job.

And God enabled him to get off the word hellbound and the picture of the devil. And he got it off so perfectly that there wasn't a scratch on the original paint. And a light bulb went on in Eric's brain.

He said, God is working in my life. That was the first indication he had of God working in his life in a spectacular way. The second happened the next day.

He sold the motorcycle at the price he was asking for. I use Eric as an example, and the other fellow as an example of the hostility that comes when a person trusts the Lord. Words like bigot, or holier-than-thou attitude, quite comfortable with him while he was a dopehead.

Now it's all changed. And his friends, of course, don't want him anymore because he's not interested in their well-partying. Overnight, he has become a weirdo.

If the world loves a professing believer, it may very well be a sign he never was really born again. Or if he was born again, he's certainly a world-borderer. If a person claims to be a Christian, yet loves the world, there's no question about it, the love of the Father is not in him.

The battle lines are clearly drawn. It's really a sad day for a Christian when he's popular with the world. It means that he's adulterated his message so that the essence of the cross is gone.

Are you happy with the gospel that's being preached today? Where sin is largely left out? I think it's a great mistake. I think it's a great mistake to rush up to people and say, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved. The only ones those words were ever spoken to were convicted sinners.

Trouble today is people are professing, and they don't even know they're sinners. They've never known the deep work of conviction of the Holy Spirit in their lives. But when a person really is where the Holy Spirit wants him to be, it's an easy thing to lead him.

Our gospel today is a gospel without sin, without repentance, and the results speak for themselves. Or it may mean that a person's life is no different from the lives of those around him. His life doesn't condemn others.

Our lives should be such that they do condemn those who are about us. It says that concerning Noah, doesn't it? By it, he condemned the world. People don't like it when your life is such that it shows them up.

It's bad for a Christian when he's like a chameleon and he accommodates himself to his environment. In so doing, he comes under the Savior's stern denunciation, Woe to you when all men speak evil of you, for so did their fathers to the false prophet. We as Christians should not be intimidated by the world's harmless frown.

We follow the one who has overcome the world, and we share in his victory. Greater is he who is in us than he who is in the world. That's our guarantee of power.

We used to sing that hymn a lot, Faith is the victory that overcomes the world. And I used to think, How can faith overcome the world? I think the answer to that is that faith enables us to see through the world. For instance, if you only look through the eyes of flesh, a TV documentary is much more exciting than that time spent in the study of the Word of God.

If you only look through the eyes of flesh, a football game is really more to be desired than a prayer meeting, isn't it? It's when you look through the eyes of faith that everything becomes different. You see things in their eternal perspective. And to me, that's what it means.

Faith is the victory that overcomes the world. Faith enables you to see through all the glitz of the world and realize how false that is. I'm interested that even the people of the world call Hollywood tinsel town.

You could expand that to describe the whole world system, tinsel town. Faith enables us to see that the world is just a passing shadow, has nothing of enduring substances, cannot give lasting satisfaction, offers only the pleasures of sin for a season. Actually, we should rejoice when we encounter the rejection of the world.

I know for younger people it's often very hard to take, but we should rejoice when that college professor sneers at our faith, when the people we work with call us obscurantists, when that fellow sitting next to us in English composition says, are you a Christer? And says it with utter scorn. When our family ridicules us for being out of touch with reality. Most of us will never be beaten or arrested for our faith.

It's a small thing and a great privilege to endure the scornful words of the world. Something we can really rejoice in. Like the early disciples, we should rejoice that we're counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.

J.G. Deck had it right on the head when he said, Master, we would no longer be at home in that which hated thee, but patient in thy footsteps go, thy sorrow as thy joy to know. We would at all confirm the power with meekness meet the darkest hour. By shame, contempt, however tried, for thou was scorned and crucified.

Dostoevsky, the Russian writer, put out a book called *The Idiot*. And the hero of this book is Prince Mishkin. And the author says that he tried to present a truly beautiful person.

You can't read the book without relating the prince to the Lord Jesus. This prince had no interest in wealth, power, or sexual conquest at all. He had no pride, no greed, no malice, no envy, no vanity, and no fear.

And he lived in the midst of a very cheap, tawdry society where the conversation of the people had nothing of eternal value to it all. It was just so shallow beyond words. And they kind of liked Prince Mishkin because of his innocence and simplicity, and yet his lack of ulterior motives really drove them up the wall.

And they called him *The Idiot*. *The Idiot*. Of course, the real question that the book asks is, Who really was *The Idiot*? I was thinking of that the other day when I was reading in John chapter 8, and it really struck me with power.

The people said to the Lord Jesus, You have a demon. Just think of that. The creatures saying to their Creator, You have a demon.

They said it more than once. See, they couldn't relate to him. They couldn't understand him.

A life like that. What does the world have to offer? Let's think about that for a while. Actually, it doesn't have very much to offer.

And it was summarized in the verses we read yesterday. The lust of the eyes. The lust of the flesh.

The pride of life. That word lust is just another word for appetite. The word itself is morally neutral, although it's usually used in the evil sense in the scriptures.

The lust of the eyes. The lust of the flesh. The pride of life.

It may include sexual desire, but it's really wider than that. The lust of the eyes is man's insatiable desire to see ever more persons, places, and things. And the lust of the eyes loves to feed on what satisfies the flesh, what stirs up the animal inside.

It cares not if it's dishonoring to Christ at all. The world's movies, television, magazines, they all appeal to the lust of the eyes. The world's art.

They offer enjoyment of what? The flesh. The lust of the flesh. It's the desire to fulfill all the cravings of the body.

Now, some of those cravings are quite legitimate, but it's the place that they're given in life that is important. They become wrong when they become the center of life, when they're indulged in excess and used contrary to the word of God. And then the pride of life, of course, has to do with a worldling's preoccupation with his person, his possessions, his pleasures, his prestige, when he glories in the things that must soon pass away.

He lives for the body, which in a few short years will be eaten by worms. What an awful way to live. He lives for pleasures which cannot provide lasting satisfaction.

He lives for fame and publicity and is quickly forgotten when he passes off the scene. In a word, those lusts add up to self-indulgence. Self-indulgence, living for self.

Not very much, is it? Think of what the kingdom of our Lord offers by contrast to that. When a person is saved, he experiences love in a way he never knew before. Brought into the family of God, and he experiences an affection in a truer way than he ever thought possible.

He experiences the love of God the Father and the love of all the redeemed people. And this is really in sharp contrast to the lust that the world offers. Lust cannot wait to get.

Love cannot wait to give. And I don't think, maybe we take it too much for granted, the area of love into which we're brought when we come to know the Blessed Savior. Joy is another benefit that accompanies salvation.

This is a joy that's quite independent of circumstances. It's a joy that can exist at the same time as sorrow, but it can't exist at the same time as sin. It's the inexpressible ecstasy of our relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ.

The source of all our singing is high in heaven above. And his precious promises are a constant source of joy to our hearts. Was it Bunyan who said that the road to heaven is paved with the promises of God? How true.

And unlike the world's happiness, the Christian's joy, as I said, is not dependent on circumstances at all. Then there's peace. The Savior brings peace, peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, the peace of God.

It's really wonderful, isn't it, when the scaffolding is falling all around us to be able to say, my times are in his hands. And I wouldn't want them to be anywhere else. As for God, his way is perfect.

The Lord offers peace of heart and peace of conscience because the work of redemption is finished and we are object of the Father's ceaseless care. Isn't it wonderful to sit here today and realize that God cannot love us more than he loves us right now. And he can't.

He loves us with the same love that he loves the Lord Jesus. He can't love us more than he loves us right at this minute. And then when a person is saved, he has the Christian's hope.

And I love that. And Rob has been talking a lot about that in the evening meeting. You know, as far as the world is concerned, the word hope has a measure of doubt in it.

I hope before I get back to California, the heat wave will end. Sharon was telling me today that the news is that thousands of miles of highway in Northern California are closed because the heat is melting the tarp. Well, I say I hope that will change before I get back.

I'm not sure. I'm not too sure. But you know, hope in the New Testament is absolutely sure.

Do you know why? Because it's founded on the promise of God and nothing is more sure than the promise of God. So when you speak of the blessed hope, you're not speaking about something that may or may not happen. You're speaking about something that's as sure as if it already taken place because God said it.

Isn't that right? The Christian's hope. What about material possessions? We don't have much in the way of material possessions. My dear friends, I don't know any greater possession than that.

Do you? The word of God. I had a lovely experience a year ago, December, when I went to the Philippines. Before I went, I asked the Lord for some little token.

You like to know that you're in the way, you know. So I asked the Lord for some little token along the way. So I went to the San Francisco airport and I had to go through the metal detector.

And my little handbag apparently set off an alarm. And a Filipino lady said to me, she said, may I look in your bag? And I said, certainly, I'll help you. And there were two zippers on the bag and she unzipped one and I unzipped the other.

Usually they never comment on anything that's in your bag. But she said to me, oh, she said, you have a lot of papers. And I said, yes.

She said, and the Bible. I said, oh yes, that's my most precious worldly possession. And she said, I know the word of God.

And she said it just like that. I know the word of God. I wanted to stay and talk to her, but there was a crowd behind us pressing to get through.

Wasn't that gracious of the Lord? You know, I believe that woman was a real believer. The way she said it, the tone of her voice, the inflection of her voice. And that's what we have.

I have a wonderful treasure, the gift of God without measure. We will travel together, my Bible and I. How thankful we can be today for the precious word of God. And then included in the gift of salvation is the unspeakable gift of prayer.

What a privilege, prayer. Just think having audience with the sovereign of the universe at any time of the day or night. Just think of with the people of God holding the balance of power in the world, which we do.

Just think of being able to control the destiny of nations through prayer. We're all shocked by the way the Soviet Union crumbled. Why did that happen like that? I'll tell you why it happened, because Christians have been praying.

That was in answer to the prayers of God's people. And then not least among the things that the kingdom of our Lord offers is the forgiveness of sin. Oh, that's wonderful, isn't it? I was reading in Our Daily Bread either today or yesterday.

Here's a computer, you know, and I've got all of that writing on the computer. And you press a key and it all vanishes. Gone.

I pressed the wrong key recently and lost all that I had written on the subject. It's all gone. But it's a good picture, isn't it, of the forgiveness of sin.

What a wonderful picture. What a wonderful thing to know. God will never bring my sins against me for judgment.

I love a little verse in the Old Believers' Hymnbook. It says, Reach my blessed Savior first. Take him from God's esteem.

Prove Jesus bears one spot of sin. Then tell me I'm unclean. Isn't that good? Let me say it again.

Reach my blessed Savior first. Take him from God's esteem. Prove Jesus bears one spot of sin.

Then tell me I'm unclean. You'd have to find sin on Jesus before you could find it on me, with which to punish me with eternal death. I think that's wonderful.

Count your blessings, dear Christian friend. Freedom from the dominion of sin. Sin shall not have dominion over you because you're not under law but under grace.

He breaks the power of canceled sin. He sets the prisoner free. Although the believer may commit isolated acts of sin, he doesn't live under the power of sin the way he did before.

And then, of course, deliverance from hell. To be able to say the torment and the fire my eyes will never see. It's wonderful, isn't it? Really wonderful.

To be brought into that worldwide family of God. My, what a joy to travel all over the world and meet God's people, and you're just with them for a few minutes, and it's the same as if you'd known them for years and years. It has nothing to do with denominations or organizations at all.

It's the blood-bought family of God. And really, the ties that bind us in this spiritual fellowship are much stronger than the ties of nature, as many of you have experienced. And then, I think the guidance of God is a wonderful perk that we have in the kingdom.

Don't you think? The guidance of God. Just to know that I don't have to map it out on my own. Just to know that the Lord has options that I wouldn't know anything about, but if I just turn myself over to Him, He can provide what's best in my life.

Help when needed. This is really wonderful. To know that the Holy Spirit comes alongside in time of need.

Our great parish, when I think of how others suffer, I shouldn't even mention this, but I had minor surgery a couple of years ago, and yet it was a wonderful experience. I felt closer to the Lord going through that than I had for months before. And I wouldn't give up the experience for anything.

That's true, isn't it? Many of the experiences in life, you look forward. Actually, the anticipation of it was worse than the thing itself. Worse than it.

Why? Because the Lord just drew near, that's why. And I knew His presence in my life in a very special way at that time. Help when needed.

And then, of course, present and future rewards. And we'll be thinking about those in one of the following meetings. They're a vital part of the believer's heritage.

Grace is wonderful. Grace saves you. Grace keeps you.

Grace tells you what to do. Gives you the power to do it, and then rewards you when you do it. Can't beat that.

Tells you what to do. Gives you the power to do it, and rewards you when you do it. And finally, I could mention eternal life.

Just think of it. We're going to be conformed to the image of God's lovely Son one of these days. And perhaps very soon.

Can't come too soon, can it? And that's only a partial list of the blessings that are ours in Christ Jesus. What a contrast. What the Lord offers and what the world offers.

What the world offers makes me gag when I think about it. Every child of God should be able to say in the words of H.K. Burlingham, Oh, worldly pomp and glory, your charms are spread in vain. I've heard a sweeter story.

I found a truer gain. Where Christ a place prepareth, there is my love to bode. There shall I gaze on Jesus.

There shall I dwell. Father, when we think of the joy that you pour into our hearts today, as we contemplate the blessings that are ours in Christ Jesus, we realize that if all the joy were poured into our hearts, they would burst. We just pause just now to thank you.

Thank you for what your love has done for us. But, oh Lord, give us a real appreciation of your kingdom and wean our hearts from anything of the world that may claim them now. We ask it in the Savior's name.

Amen.

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