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Preacher: Christopher Baker

[0:00] You know, whether we get all the notes to that song right or not is kind of inconsequential. But it is important whether we live out these words, isn't it?

You know, I was just thinking about the chorus that we just sang. Ancient words ever true. God's word is always true, isn't it? And it's always going to be true. How many other things in life can you say that about that you know is always right?

How many things in your life are always right? Don't point at your spouse. They are not always right. Nothing. Nothing else.

We can get advice from all kinds of people, all kinds of places that seem good. We can read self-help books. We can read all kinds of books to gain in knowledge. But you know what? Those things can all be wrong at times. But we have God's word that was inspired by God. Every word in here, it says, is God-breathed? And is profitable for us.

[1:01] For doctrine. For reproof. For correction. For instruction in righteousness. That's what this is for. Ancient words ever true. You know what we sang after that? Changing me and changing you.

This is meant to change us. Do we realize that? Do you know what happens, though, far too often? Not just in the world, but it can happen in our lives, too.

We want the Bible to reflect what we think. Does that ever happen? And instead, what we think needs to be shaped and molded by the Bible.

Not the other way around. But there are people that want to change the Bible because, well, it's outdated. The world has moved beyond that. Folks, that's not the way it is. This is what should shape and what should mold.

And then finally it says, we have come with open hearts. Have you? We can sing it, but you need to answer that question. Have you come with an open heart?

[2:06] I don't know. Some of you have. I don't know about the rest of you. Is your heart open? That means that when God's word is shared, that your heart is ready to receive it. That you're willing to say, it doesn't matter what I think.

What matters is what God's word says. And that I shape my thinking after that, not the other way around. So I hope that we are ready this morning to have open hearts and acknowledge that there are areas in our lives that need to change.

Because none of us are perfect, are we? That goes right along with what Judy was sharing with the clay. We still need to be molded and shaped into what God wants. God is not done with us.

You know, I always, whenever I think of clay and pottery, he's sitting straight back from me right down the aisle. John is back there against the back wall. John is amazing at doing pottery.

And if you've ever seen some of the work that he does, I just look at it and I'm just amazed. But I am guessing, what is the last step in the pottery, John? Firing it.

[3:11] What happens after you fire it? Is it still soft? No, it's hard. It's done. It's completed. Guess what? None of us are there yet. We are not completed yet.

God is still shaping us. He is still molding us. But we got to allow God to. All right? So, as we read God's Word this morning, I hope we acknowledge that and understand that. Now, if you have these ancient words that we've been singing about, the Bible, get them out.

Turn to 2 Corinthians 3 is where we're going to be this morning. And again, I always encourage you to follow along. Make sure that what I or whoever else is up here, make sure that what they're

sharing isn't just their own opinion, but it's what the Bible says.

It's what God's Word says. 2 Corinthians 3, we're going to be starting in the first verse. If you are able, I would ask if you would stand as we read God's Word this morning.

2 Corinthians 3, beginning in the first verse. And this is what God's Word shares. Do we begin again to commend ourselves? Or need we, as some others, epistles of commendation to you or letters of commendation from you?

[4:25] 2 Corinthians 3, verse 1. You are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men. 3 Corinthians 4, verse 1. For as much as you are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God, not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart, and such trust have we through Christ toward God.

Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God, who also has made us able ministers of the New Testament, not of the letter, but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. But if the ministration of death, written and engraved in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance, which glory was to be done away, how shall not the ministration of the Spirit be rather glorious?

For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, how much more does the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory? For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect by reason of the glory that excels.

For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remains is glorious. Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech.

[5:51] And not as Moses, which put a veil over his face, that the children of Israel could not steadfastly look to the end of that which is abolished. But their minds were blinded. For until this day remains the same veil untaken away in the reading of the Old Testament, which veil is done away in Christ.

But even to this day, when Moses has read, the veil is upon their heart. Nevertheless, he shall turn to the Lord, the veil, when he shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away.

Now the Lord is that Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all with open face, beholding as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

Let's pray. Lord God, thank you again that we could be together in this place today, that we could know that we are in the presence of a living God. That as much as we can look around and see each other, that we can know that you are also here with us.

And Lord, this morning, I pray that you would speak to us from your words. Speak to our hearts. Help us to understand that you have a message for each one of us this morning, that no one is here by accident, but Lord, you've enabled us to be here, and you have things you want to share with us.

[7:10] So just help us to have ears that are ready to listen to it. Thank you again, Lord, for your presence here, and it's in the name of Jesus Christ that we pray. Amen. You can be seated this morning.

You know, as we look at this chapter, there's a lot in it, isn't there? And you know, as you read through it, part of it gets to be like, I don't really know what he's saying. It can be kind of confusing. It's kind of wordy.

And yet, Paul at one point says, we use plainness of speech in verse 12. Well, plainness of speech in this chapter don't seem to go together, because this chapter can be kind of confusing.

But there are a few things in it that I think we can understand very, very clearly. And if you look in the first verse, there's a word I want us to begin to think about this morning. Do we begin again to commend ourselves, is how Paul starts this chapter.

What does it mean to commend yourself? Any thoughts? What if somebody else commends you? What does that mean? What's that?

[8:13] Compliment. To say something good. Any other definitions you would add? To praise you. All right. Do you like being commended? How many of you like to be praised and told something good?

Raise your hand. All right. Some of you have never given you a compliment again, because you didn't raise your hand. You don't like it, so I'm not going to do it. Those that didn't have your hands up, if your spouse didn't raise their hand, don't compliment them anymore.

They don't like it. They don't want them. We all like that, don't we? Let's be honest. We like to be commended for somebody to say, good job, or you look good this morning, or you look good today. That's commending, being praised, and built up. We like that. But look at how Paul starts this. Do we begin to commend ourselves? What does it mean to commend yourself?

To pat yourself on the back? Good job, Chris. You did a good job today. What do you think about people that do that? Or that go around, look how nice I look today.

[9:20] Don't I look good? Don't you like this tie? Ray Grigsby gave me this tie several years ago. It's my motorcycle tie, but doesn't it look good on me? Isn't this my color?

I just look good in it, don't I? I don't even feel comfortable saying that. When somebody commends themselves all the time, what do you begin to think?

They love themselves. They love themselves maybe a little too much. There's maybe some vanity that's involved. Conceit. We don't look at that in a positive light, do we?

But what it's talking about is how we view ourselves, and what we're looking for in life. Because there are people that just want that praise, that need that praise. It's kind of about how we view ourselves, and what we really want out of life.

Because there are people that chase after that their entire lives, aren't they? They just want others to tell them how good they are. They want that fame. They want everybody to know their name, and everybody to know how great they are.

[10:27] How we view ourselves is what we're going to look at this morning. And, you know, it has something in common with a couple things this morning.

The first thing, and maybe you're thinking, what does this have to do with, what are we doing today? How many of you rode a motorcycle here? Tammy, you were on the back.

You didn't walk. Okay, so this is our Motorcycle Sunday, right? And I know some of you, motorcycles isn't your thing, and that's fine.

But I know over the years, I've been asked multiple times, why do you ride a motorcycle? What is this motorcycle thing that you have? I don't get it. And, you know, there's a lot of answers that I could give people.

I could say, well, it's in my blood. My grandfather rode a motorcycle until he was in his 80s. My dad, growing up, he always had a motorcycle. We grew up riding many bikes and all kinds of things.

[11:22] My brother rides a motorcycle. My son rides a motorcycle. His is here today. It's just, yeah, I can say that. But there's more to it than that. If I really begin to think, what do I like about motorcycles?

Why do I like riding a motorcycle? You know the number one thing that I would really have to tell you? The open road. That's part of it. Travis said the open road, the wind in your face, bugs in your teeth.

No, not that part. That's the nutritional part. The nutritional value of a motorcycle ride. You know, part of it for me, and maybe other people that ride motorcycles, it's something different. But for me, part of it is the freedom that you feel.

When I get on a motorcycle, we didn't take it this last week for our anniversary. We usually do. But there's just something about getting on it. And if it's Tammy and I, if we're going on a trip, it's just she and I.

We talked about that this week. She and I and a couple bags of stuff. She really has to pare down on what she takes. She, I, the bike, and the road.

[12:29] That's all there is. It's just there's something simplistic about it. And there's something, some sense of freedom. And you ride down the road, and guess what? You can go wherever. And it's just you're out in the air and in the open, and you just feel more a part of things.

It's just that feeling of freedom and independence that I enjoy. And all of us have things that give us that sense of freedom that we enjoy because we like freedom, don't we?

We like that feeling that I can do whatever I want. I can go wherever I want. We like that. And freedom is something in this country that we live in. That's the other thing about this morning. This is the Sunday before a holiday, isn't it?

This week, we will celebrate a holiday. And what holiday is that? Okay, you've just told me the date. Here's the thing about this holiday we celebrate. We often know it and call it the 4th of July, right? All we're really saying there is a date, right? That's when we celebrate it. So what? What does that tell us about the holiday? It tells us what day on the calendar it is. We celebrate Independence Day, don't we?

[13:34] What is independence? Freedom. It's all about freedom. It's all about a couple hundred years ago that our nation didn't want to live under the rule and tyranny of Great Britain.

And you know I'm not going to give you a history lesson. That's not what this morning is all about. But it was all about wanting more what? Freedom. Wanting more independence.

Independence. Not having a king across the ocean telling us what we have to do. Now, are you glad that they had that feeling and that desire for freedom and independence?

Are you glad about that? I am too. We wouldn't have the nation that we have today. We wouldn't have the freedoms that we have today. We can be grateful that they desired that freedom and independence.

But here's the other thing. Can a desire for freedom and independence ever go too far? Can it ever get us into trouble?

[14:37] Yeah, it can. My grandson's helping me this morning. Can a sense of freedom and independence ever get Ridge in trouble?

Are we any different? You know, we understand that with children. We understand too much of a sense of freedom and independence because really at its core, what is a desire to be independent? Not being responsible to someone else or having to listen to them, but what? Doing your own thing. Not being accountable to anyone. If complete independence is I'm not dependent on anybody else. I can do whatever I want whenever I want. That can get us into trouble. Ridge is too. If he did whatever he wanted whenever he wanted, if Caleb and Sarah let him do that, what would be the result?

It would be disastrous, wouldn't it? I remember when Caleb was little. He had a table, butter knife in his hand.

[15:50] And he was looking real close at an outlet. If I gave him complete independence and freedom and just said, go right ahead, you don't have to listen to me, what would have happened?

It wouldn't have ended well, would it? Now he's like an electrician, so I don't know. Maybe there was something there. But we understand we can't allow them to have complete independence and freedom.

We want them to have some and we teach them to have some, but there have to be constraints on that. Right? You and I need to realize that same thing.

We have freedom and independence in our nation, and we need to praise God for that and be thankful for the sacrifices that were made so that we have that. But we also need to be cautious as people that we don't want to be independent from God.

And that is such, that's really the source of so many problems in this world that we live in. People having a desire to be independent from God, to say, I'm not accountable to God, I want to do whatever I want to do.

[16:59] How many problems throughout time has that caused? All the way back to the beginning, to Lucifer, Satan. He was an angel, is what the Bible says, right? He was an angel and he was in heaven.

And what happened? He became bad. But what was the badness that happened? He wanted more power.

He wanted to be equal with God. He didn't want to have to be underneath God. He didn't want that dependence on God. He wanted to be separated from God, to do his own thing.

Then you have Adam and Eve come into the picture after mankind is created. God says, don't eat of the tree. Satan tempted Adam and Eve and guess what?

They made the decision, I don't want to listen to God. I want to do this instead. The result? We still suffer from it today. Mankind fell.

[17:58] Sin entered into the world and all the bad stuff that goes with it came from people wanting independence from God. Look at our world today. How much of that can we see around us?

People wanting independence from God and His Word. This tells us what is right and wrong and yet what do people want to do? We want to do what we think is right and wrong instead of what God says is right and wrong.

We want to stick our knife in that electrical outlet instead of listening to God. That's what it boils down to. Because all these things apart from God's Word, do you know what they do in our lives? They hurt us. They destroy us. Physically here in this life and for all eternity when we choose to be independent from God's Word.

Do we understand that? And look on in this chapter that we're reading. I want you to look down in verse 5. Because it shares a real truth that I hope that we understand.

[18:59] Paul says, Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything of ourselves. What does it mean to think you're sufficient of yourself?

You don't need anything or anybody. Paul says we're not that way. But sometimes we like to think we're that way.

What are we apart from God? We are not sufficient. You and I are not enough apart from God. Do we understand that? We sometimes think we are.

And when life is going well, we can very easily be fooled into thinking we can get along without God. We can figure it out on our own and everything will be fine. When our lives are going well, we can be tricked into thinking that very, very easily.

But what happens as soon as we get sick? What do we understand and realize very quickly? Can you heal yourself? Are you able to do that?

[20:00] What about when we have other things happen that we don't know how to deal with? Guess what? We're all of a sudden reminded that we need God.

Physically, in our lives here on this earth, we understand we need God because we go through hard things, don't we? Right? Don't we? How many of you have been through something hard in your life?

Raise your hand. I'm asking you to do this in all sincerity and honesty. Raise your hand if you've been through something hard in your life. Could you deal with it on your own?

Could you solve it all by yourself? We are not sufficient of ourselves. We do not have enough strength. We do not have enough wisdom. We do not have enough ability.

We fall short. We are not sufficient of ourselves. What do we need and who do we need? Not that we are sufficient of ourselves, verse 5, to think anything as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God.

[21:14] What does that mean? Our sufficiency is of God. What does that mean? Colton? We are not sufficient by ourselves, but we are sufficient with God.

God adds where we lack. Do we understand that? Where we lack, God makes up for that. And He gives us what we need beyond that. We are complete.

We are sufficient when we have God in our lives. When we don't have God in our lives, guess what? We're not complete. And we're not enough. There are so many people in this world that are looking for something.

They realize they're not enough and they realize there is something missing, but they don't know what. So they try to fill it with all kinds of things. They may try to fill it with substances, drugs, or alcohol. They may try to fill that with success in life, with accomplishments.

They may try to fill that with money, with finances, all kinds of things. They may fill that with busyness. You stay busy enough, you just don't have to think about it, right? But all those things in the end will leave you understanding that it's not enough and that you're not enough.

[22:36] But as believers, we have to understand that when we have God in our lives, guess what? We are sufficient. That is the truth that God

wants us to understand. But you know what? People are blinded to that. You know, as we read on down, clear down in 15. I know we're skipping over a bunch of verses there. And he's talking specifically to the Jewish people that didn't recognize Jesus Christ. But he says, even to this day when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart. What's a veil? It's a covering, right?

Do you see better with a veil or without a veil? Without. Without. It covers your vision. It keeps you from seeing something. You know, when a couple gets married, I know it doesn't always happen today, but what used to happen with the bride?

What did they have on? A veil. What was the purpose of that? They didn't look good, so they needed a veil on? I mean, really, what was the purpose of a veil? Don't tell a bride that.

[23:36] What was the purpose of a veil? It was so that the husband wouldn't see her until the right moment. That's what it was.

And all of a sudden, when she came down the aisle and they were joined in marriage, what happened? That veil gets lifted up and then you're like, oh, you're beautiful, honey. That's a purpose. All of a sudden, you then can see clearly when that veil is raised.

Paul is talking here and saying a lot of people are wearing a veil. If you don't believe in God and in His Word, and if you don't have Christ in your heart, you are wearing a veil. You are not seeing the truth, and you are not seeing clearly.

But look at what he says after this in verse 16. Nevertheless, when he shall turn to the Lord, when someone turns to the Lord, when someone accepts Jesus Christ and God's plan for their life, what happens?

That veil is what? Taken away. That veil is lifted up, it's taken off, and then there's that magic moment when you see the bride. It's like, oh, it's beautiful. Same thing.

[24:43] When someone comes to accept the Lord and they see the truth of what this world is and what God wants us to be, that veil is taken away. And they realize all of a sudden there's something more to this life than finances.

There's something more to this life than worldly success. There's something more to this life than drugs or alcohol or relationships, whatever. There's more. Because that's what God has for us. God has more for us. He has the truth for us to see. And the truth is that we need Jesus Christ. And when we understand that truth, do you know what we end up with?

You know what we end up with? Look at verse 17. Now the Lord is that spirit. And where the spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom, liberty.

Whatever word your Bible uses means the same thing. That's where freedom is found. Freedom is not found in being completely independent from God. Freedom is found when we find our relationship with our Creator.

[25:50] And He shows us the truth. You know, there's another verse in the Bible where it says, The truth shall make you or set you free. Truth and freedom are linked, folks.

If we're being fed a lie, we're not going to have the truth and freedom that we want. But when we follow God, when we follow His Word, when we understand that we need God, that is when we will truly experience freedom.

Because the greatest feeling... And people, they follow after this sense of independence because they think that's going to lead them to joy and peace and happiness. But chasing all those things will not lead them there.

If you want joy and peace and happiness, you need to understand your dependence on God. And then that's the joy and peace of freedom that you'll find. Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.

There is freedom. Don't look other places. God has freedom for us. Along with all the other wonderful things that peace and joy and hope. Do you believe God has those things for you?

[27:03] Yes. But we will never truly find those things apart from God because we are not sufficient of ourselves. We need God to get there.

We need Jesus Christ in our lives. You know, when we were on our trip this last week, we were somewhere where I had no cell phone reception. You know what that's like anymore?

And the biggest thing that I realized is... Come to Oakwood, yes. A mile out of Oakwood, it goes. A mile on the other side, it comes back. But when you're out without cell phone reception, the first thing that I realized, there's a lot of things I can do without.

Right? Right? A map when you're somewhere you don't know is not one of those things. Tammy's trying to bring up... Do I need to turn right or left?

I don't know. It won't come up. I need to know. Do I turn right or left? I don't know. Well, what do you think? I don't know. So guess what we did?

[28:09] Let's go this way. It'll take us somewhere. Apart from God, that's what we're doing in life. That is what we're doing. Do we understand that? We're just coming up to a corner and say, I don't know.

We'll just go this way and hope it works out. We're not enough. We don't have enough. But God is the one that has it all. He's the one that says, I know you. I know what you need in life and I know what I need from you.

And you need to go this way. When we follow God and His Word, that is our life. This morning, I don't know where you're at with God. I don't know how much you're leaning on Him, how much you're realizing you need Him in your life.

Maybe you don't even have Jesus Christ in your life. If you don't, make this morning the morning that you decide to recognize the truth that you need God, to ask Jesus Christ into your heart.

Because when you do that, you will experience true freedom. You will experience the love, peace, and joy that cannot be found anywhere other than in Jesus Christ. Make sure this morning, before you leave this back door, that your heart is right with God and that is only done through Jesus Christ.

[29:16] Don't wait. Make sure this morning. And maybe you've known Jesus Christ for years. But maybe you recognize you're not really leaning on Him the way that you should. You're relying on yourself.

Lean on Him. Let's pray together this morning. Lord God, once again, we just thank You for being the God that You are. Lord, we just pray that You would help Your Word to shape and mold our hearts.

Help us to understand that without You, we are not enough. We are not sufficient. It is only with You in our lives that we are enough. Thank You for the hope, the peace, the love, and the true freedom that You can give us.

And I pray, Lord, that if there's anyone in here this morning that does not know that, does not have that in their life, that this morning is the day that they turn to You and accept You into their heart and life, that they no longer fall for the lies of this world, but that they rely on You.

Just speak to our hearts, work in our lives. And it's in the name of Jesus Christ that we pray. Amen. Amen. This morning as we close, we're going to sing a song like we always do, but I want to remind you, the altar's open.

[30:23] If God is ever tugging on your heart that you need to talk to Him on a Sunday morning at the end of the service, don't tune that out. We can come up with all kinds of things in our mind. What is everybody else going to think?

Am I going to hold everybody else up? Are they going to get to their meal two minutes later than they want? Don't worry about those things. If God is speaking to your heart, come and pray and talk to Him. If you just want to talk to Him on your own, that is fine.

If you want me to pray with you, I would love to. But if the Lord is speaking to your heart this morning, come and talk to Him. Oh, bow our heads as we close in prayer together this morning. And with every head bowed and every eye closed, you know the song we just sang this morning, I Need Thee Every Hour.

We need to be willing to admit that we need Jesus Christ, that we need a relationship with God, that we need the strength and the hope and the joy and the peace and all those things He gives us in life.

This morning, if you're willing, I would ask you, if you feel that in your heart, if you recognize that you need Him, I just encourage you just to raise your hand this morning as we close in prayer.

[31:31] Lord God, we just thank You for this morning that You've given us. Lord, help us to recognize each and every day that we truly do need You. As much as we need air, as much as we need water, as much as we need

food, we need You.

Help us not to forget that. Remind us of that on a daily basis. Lord, we thank You for each one that's here, and as we leave this place, help us to leave knowing that You love us, knowing that You have a plan for our lives, if we're willing to follow it.

Lord, we pray for those who'll be riding bikes today, and Lord, I just pray that You'd watch over us, just give us safety. Thank You for a beautiful day to ride together. But Lord, watch over each one of us this week. Thank You for being the loving and wonderful God that You are.

And we ask and pray these things in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen. God bless you. Have a wonderful week. Judy also shared there is more Play-Doh on the way out, if anyone did not get one, and some scriptures to go along with them.