

Planned Compromise

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[0 : 00] By way of questions, here they are. I mean, they were in here. Two questions are, what would be the consequence of each Christian in Vancouver, or in Canada, giving their contemporary five loaves and two fish to something of the gospel, the church, and for Canada?

What would be the consequences? I'll tell you what the consequences would be. Zero. There wouldn't be any consequence. The reason I say that is because I listen to this all the time. If we could get a thousand people to give five dollars each, we'd have five thousand dollars. Simple, eh? Remember, you're talking about a thousand people. And who's going to go around and hit a thousand people for five dollars each?

You see, it's not... The only reason the miracle of the loaves and the fishes worked is because Jesus accepted this thing, and Jesus did something. And our world is not capable of any human solution.

God has to move in on our world with some kind of, what I would say, supernatural redemptive activity in order for anything to result. We can keep the wheels going round, and it would be very nice if people would give their five loaves and two fishes.

[1 : 29] But it wouldn't make a lot of difference unless Christ himself, who is Lord, accomplishes what his purpose is through that. And that's the thing that you have to keep your eye on.

Because people just... People are different, and I don't think they work this way. Though they speculate about it. The next thing it says is how does God's will and our free will interact with some of the challenges we are faced with here.

Well, our free will does the damage, and God's will brings it all around to accomplish his purpose. Do you want to know any more about it? I think that will come out a little bit, and perhaps I can just let you listen to this in order that you can see.

The topic today is planned compromise. And I've tried to figure out why I ever gave that title to this talk, and I cannot figure it out.

So I think it's probably Lisa's fault for misreading my handwriting or something. because I would say that the one thing this passage says is that there is no possibility of compromise at all.

[2 : 45] There is zero possibility of any compromise. And this is an amazing passage containing an amazing dialogue.

You know, you can talk about the dialogues of Plato or Aristotle or any of those things. But this passage, John 8, 31 to the end, is really an amazing dialogue.

And it's hard to read, and it's hard to follow, and it's a very impacted kind of teaching, but it is a really amazing dialogue. And it begins with a confrontation between Jesus and the Jews, the Jews who had believed in him.

And that throws everybody off guard because, well, if they believed in him, why did they end up killing him at the end of the story? Their belief was not adequate. And I want to give you a rather crude illustration, but maybe its crudity will make it memorable to you and you will understand what happens here.

It says that they believed in him, but they didn't believe on him. They didn't have an ongoing, continuing relationship to Jesus Christ. Now, the reason prostitution survives in a city like Vancouver is because it offers sexual gratification without personal involvement.

[4 : 08] And that's what most people want in the realm of religion, too. Some intellectual gratification without any involvement. And it just doesn't exist.

And it doesn't exist for the reasons that Jesus puts down here today when he says, if you continue in my word, that means that's where you live. That's where you abide.

That's the place you put down roots. That's what you build your life around. My word. That's what it means to continue in my word. There is, as you will understand, there is, by reason of the great, of the New Age movement, there is something comparable to this, which is called in various ways, cosmic consciousness, God-realization, self-illumination, nirvana, satori, atonement, gnosis, and those kinds of things.

And those are ways of deliberately nurturing your mind in order to cope with the problems of our world. And that's what the New Age movement advocates.

Well, in the same way, Jesus Christ advocates that you continue in my word, that your mind be structured and your understanding ordered by continuing in my word.

[5 : 29] It creates, in a sense, the basic pattern of your thinking. Your pattern of thinking as a human being is highly conditioned by the circumstances in which you've lived your life.

The schools you've gone to, the parents you've had, the friends you've had, the books you've read, all those things go into ordering and structuring your mind so that when you are caught in the heat of making a decision, your mind is already, in a sense, dealt with it, and it can give you the answer and you will act on it.

And so Jesus says, what I want you to do is I want you to continue in my word, to make my word the thing that structures the pattern of your thinking and the ordering of your life.

That's what he means by continuing in my word. And he says, if you do that, that's what it'll mean to be my disciples. That is, that's what disciples do.

Their mind is structured by the word of Jesus and as they live their life, they're living on the basis of the structure that's been developed by them abiding in the word of Jesus.

[6 : 44] If you continue in my word, you will be my disciples. Then Jesus says, you will know the truth. And that needs some explanation.

It's like this. I don't know. This, just for your information, information is a church.

Right? And this is a person going to church. Now you may think that that picture is out of proportion, but it isn't.

Because this person as he goes to church doesn't expect to find anything there. The thing that really thrills him, the thing that really enralls him, is that he is going to church.

That is, he is, the world is going to be a better place because he is there. The church is going to be a better place because he is there.

[7 : 51] And when people see him there, they will see the model of his behavior and think, well, the world is a better place because here I am. until, by some act of mercy, the still, small voice of God says, so am I.

And it's time we sort it out. Which of us is the most important? Now you see, what happens is, when Jesus says, you will know the truth, what he means is you will know who you are in relationship to the objective reality of the world in which you live, the objective reality of God.

Now if you take even a man like Job, Job is known for his suffering. And when you read the book of Job, you see the pattern of his suffering laid out in excruciating detail.

And you see the agony that Job had going through this thing. And you see that what ultimately happens in the book of Job is he says, yes, you are God and I'm Job.

That's what it takes 42 chapters to figure out. And that's why Jesus says, this process, which is vital to your life, is that you will continue in my word, you will be my disciples, and you will know the truth.

[9 : 22] you will understand who you are in terms of the objective reality of truth of God that is in your world.

You won't be the truth and the rest of the world has to relate to you. You will discover the truth as something outside of you having a reality beyond you that is not affected by you and that truth is something you will come to relate to as you continue in my word and as my disciples you will know that truth.

You will suddenly discover who you are. Now, the people he was talking to didn't understand that. But then he says, having known the truth, you will then be free.

And that's a hard word. It's a hard word because it's so popular.

You know that it's interesting in the etymology of the word religion that a lot of people think etymologically that religion refers to a Latin root which says it's something you are bound to or bound by.

[10:43] So that a lot of thinking, at least in the Western world, when it uses the word religion which is very rarely used in the New Testament, I might add, if at all. There is a reference in James, you remember, pure religion and undefiled.

But religion as it's understood in our society as a word derived from Latin says, it means to be bound. bond. And so most people consider freedom as something which happens when you break the bonds of those superstitions and those inhibitions that you live under according to your religion and at last you are a free person.

That's what our world thinks of as freedom. But a fine etymological dictionary says there's another possibility and that is that freedom has something to do with religion has something to do with diligence.

That is that you take something very seriously. And the religion that Jesus is describing here is that you will take his word very seriously.

You will recognize the seriousness of it and living in that word you will be his disciples you will know the truth and you will be free because you see the reality.

[12:14] Now last night I talked to a family a mother a father and a child and I talked to them about the matter of Christian faith and the fact that they didn't share it because they didn't that's why they came to talk to me about it but it was almost impossible for them to talk to each other and you know how difficult it is zealous a Christian as you may be to talk about your faith to somebody in your own family to talk about somebody who is close to you.

there is so much emotional overload there is so much tradition there is so much backlog it's very very difficult to talk because there is so much that's subjective in the relationship and somebody else can come along and talk to them and maybe impress them very much but it's very difficult to do that and I think what Christ is saying here is talking about that he's talking about the freedom that you have to say that this is the truth you know Job recognized the truth who was God and the fact that God was God whether he suffered or not that God was not dependent on who he was God was God whether he suffered or not we recognize in terms of our relationship to people who are close to us that in order to communicate with them we have to be able to talk to them and in order to talk to them there's got to be some kind of objective reality that we can identify apart from the kind of emotional interwovenness of our lives with theirs which makes it almost impossible to objectify anything and that's what Jesus is saying when he talks about the truth and the truth making you free well once that happened as you read on in the story things go badly and the argument develops very rapidly and it's a brilliant argument they say we're children of Abraham and we are free we were born free there is no question that we are free when I look at other people I know that I'm free and that was the kind of argument they brought to Christ that they were free and for him to suggest to them that they needed to become free was entirely wrong and Jesus went on and told them that there was a kind of freedom which was quite different and that the freedom which he was advocating was the freedom which belonged to a son in a family rather than a slave a slave is entirely motivated by the hope for reward or the fear of punishment and most of us in our relationship to God have our theology is based on the fear of punishment and the hope of reward but Jesus says there's another kind of relationship to God and that's being a child of God in which you live in a loving response to a God who's made himself known to you and that's entirely different from slavery this talks about slavery which is which is deep rooted in our lives it doesn't talk about it talks about sin not as a kind of incidental happening in the course of our lives it talks about sins in our lives as something which come up from a condition in our lives which is enslavement to sin in other words when we do sin we are acting according to who we are at the most basic kind of level so he's saying that you don't know what it is to be sons and he they go on in their argument with him and said Abraham is our father Jesus said to them if Abraham were your father why are you seeking to kill me you know

I mean he points out the rather logical consistency that's involved because he too is the child of Abraham the fulfillment of the promise of Abraham and yet they're seeking to kill him so he says there's got to be some kind of basic contradiction so they unload their guns at him and say we weren't born of fornication and it's a well known fact publicly discussed very often that you were as they refer to the fact of Mary bearing a child before she and Joseph were formally married and so they bring up the subject of Jesus fornication they say we have one father even God and he says well if God were your father then you would love me now you see when it happens that we get into an argument about the nature and character of God

I mean it almost invariably happens that you find anybody with whom you raise the subject of Christianity or of the Christian gospel or of the person of Jesus Christ you almost invariably find a well formed deeply held opposition to the idea it's it's just there you know it does they don't have to cultivate it it just naturally expresses itself it's right there and you and you can you can do that on the bus on the way home if you want you can prove that to yourself by asking somebody and discovering the opposition that is there like I took many missions at universities in years gone by and the thing that always was a great encouragement to me was the opposition to the gospel on the university campus you know that it was foolishness well I knew that before I went there but that was that opposition was always there and all

[18 : 35] Jesus is doing here is to identify for them the fact that though they say they are the children of God yet they want to put him to death and he asks them why that should be then he goes on and says if you want to know who your father is your father is the devil and your will is to do your father's desire he was a murderer from the beginning has nothing to do with truth because there is no truth in him when he lies he speaks according to his own nature or he is a liar and the father of lies now you know that we talk about that in much more polite terms we talk about illusions and we talk about concepts and we talk about all sorts of things to which we subscribe in our society which we know are lies basically but we have a lot nicer ways of talking about it

Jesus didn't use anything in terms of refined language he just said you are the children of your father and your father was a liar from the beginning and you know that a lie is much more convenient than the truth you know that a lie sells better a lie does everything it communicates better it communicates faster it puts people in relationship more quickly Satan knows what he's doing as the father of lies but the trouble is when you come to the to the rub when you confront the person of Jesus Christ you discover that the one whom you should be able to listen to you should be able to respond to you cannot hear and so Jesus goes on and develops the argument further with them and says he who is of God hears the word of God the reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of

God so you see this father of lies does two things he means that you speak lies and the second dimension of it is that you can't hear the truth you know the truth is so alien to who we are to who these people are that they can't hear it and of course that's that's my problem with with my wife the world she has to live in tends to be dominated by me and her view of her world is very disappointing to me you see the problem and that this is that the world which we live in is dominated by God but we can't hear him because his view of who we are is quite unacceptable to us he doesn't understand who we are and anything he has to say seems to be alien to us so the

Jews become more indignant their sort of indignation register keeps mounting right there and what they say is are we not right in saying you are a Samaritan and you have a demon well time's about gone but I just need to work through with you this this is the case that they build against Jesus we are free we are the sons of Abraham we we hate evil we are a pure ancestral lineage we recognize the demonic we are not Samaritans we are all sons of our father all those things are the things by which they reinforce who they are and Jesus comes up and challenges every one of those and then he takes them to the final challenge and says I'll tell you what the final challenge is and he puts it in the words that

I'd like to quote he says to them if anyone keeps my word he will never see death now that was a very profound statement in other words death will no longer be a dimension of your life if you can keep my word remember that word keep the idea of abiding in the words of Jesus if you abide in my word you will never see death there's a lovely poem by Robert Browning about the grammarian do you know who the grammarian funeral and it describes this fellow dying but he was so totally obsessed with his grammar and the parsing of words and putting words together that Browning tells the story of him working away at his grammar and working away at his grammar and it describes how his feet have already gone cold and death is moving slowly up his body and he's still working away at his grammar and he's keeping going he doesn't notice the process that he is physically dying because he's so obsessed with what he's doing well that really is to illustrate this point I think that Jesus is saying that because you keep my words and you will be so occupied with the reality of those words that death will not come to you as something which is very significant it will be an event which maybe takes place in an afternoon but that's all there is to it and then of course they said now we know you have a demon because

[24 : 36] Abraham died and then he insulted them further and said yes but before Abraham died he rejoiced to see my day and then they said you're not yet 50 years old how could he rejoice to see your day and then he said to them before Abraham was I am then they took him out and tried to stone him to death you know I mean that's how the argument developed and I must say that I think John's very fair in giving it giving them and Jesus giving them their argument and letting them develop and you can follow the consistency and the logic and the anger and the indignation that led them from the place where they were beginning to listen to him but were not prepared to enter into a relationship to him to the point where they took him out and tried to put him to death and Jesus responded to them and answered them all the way he said you hate me you won't hear me you want to kill me you are slaves who commit sin as an inevitable expression of your slavery you seek your own glory you are subject to death and then when they went to kill him he walked away from among them so that they couldn't do it yet even though inevitably they did well you see that's let me put it this way to you the thing that's right at the heart of this is that

Jesus is there and this massive argument is brought against him with the intention of leading to his death and destruction and to his ignominy and humiliation all those things are happening to him and Jesus says I don't seek my own glory there is one who seeks my glory and the contest will be death and on the third day God raised him from the dead to vindicate that this is my son and you see that's what that's why Jesus in this dialogue with the world around him why Jesus is the one in whom God has chosen to reveal himself and this is why we can't back away from it and this is why when Jesus makes the promise and that promise is heard and responded to in faith you have that process with which this passage begins when Jesus says to them continue in my word you will be my disciples you will know the truth in terms of your relationship to it not know the ultimate reality of all there is to know but you will know the truth in terms of your relationship to God and you will be free you'll be free to live your life to die your death and to inherit your promise that will belong to you as free and so that this this is the issue and this is the argument let me pray our God and Father as we try and trace through this dialogue between

Jesus and those who believed in him but were not prepared to believe on him to put their whole trust in him so by your Holy Spirit search our hearts and help us to know whether in our hearts there is great opposition to you profound and deep opposition or whether in fact we are ready to open our hearts to you to allow you to be who you are no matter what the consequences are with for us God grant that we may continue in the words of Jesus we may be his disciples without shame we may know the truth in terms of our relationship to you and that we may know the freedom which belongs to us because our lives are in your hands we ask this in Jesus name Amen