

July 4th Service

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[0 : 00] 2nd Corinthians chapter number 5. I encourage you to read the entire chapter sometime when you have time. This is a really good chapter. Paul admonishing the believers here at Corinth.

And then here at the end of the chapter, he kind of gives them some instruction. And I want to read the last three verses for you. Verse number 19, To wit that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.

Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us. We pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him, of course that being Christ, to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

That phrase there, there's two phrases that I want to focus on. The first one in verse number 19. The second one is actually just one word in verse number 20. In verse number 19, he uses the phrase, the word of reconciliation.

We have been given the message, we as Christians, as born again children of God, have been given the message that contains the hope, the peace, and the forgiveness that this world, that our friends and our neighbors and our co-workers so desperately search for.

[1 : 09] We have been given that, and therefore because of that, we now have a responsibility to give it to them. The next thing I want to notice is verse number 20. Paul says we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us.

And so Paul is telling them, hey, I'm an ambassador of Christ, and I'm encouraging you to recognize your duty and your responsibility as an ambassador of Christ as well. And I jotted down some things about an ambassador that I want to point out to you this evening.

Number one, an ambassador is someone who represents someone else. That seems pretty straightforward, seems pretty blunt. Everything he does reflects on the person or country he is representing.

And so here I could give you a list of this massive list of don'ts. And I think we should be able to deduce those. You know, there are certain things that as Christians we don't do because it reflects on the one that we represent, the one that we're an ambassador of.

However, there is more to being an ambassador. An ambassador also lives his life according to the directions of the one he is representing. He lives where he is told. He moves when he is told.

[2 : 14] He keeps a schedule as he is told. And most importantly, he speaks as he is told. When he becomes the ambassador, he no longer has opinions or a voice of his own.

He learns to speak and even think as the person that he is representing would speak and think. As Christians, we represent Christ. Hence the name Christians. Therefore, we act, speak, and even think as Christ would.

We don't share our opinions. We share the Word of God when we speak. When we see someone who is lost and on their way to hell, we don't shy away and worry about our reputation or how they'll feel about us.

We share the gospel with them. People everywhere are hurting, broken, and in despair. Our responsibility to God and to them is to share the wonderful news of Christ with them. It is the height of arrogance to hold the solution to every human's problem and yet refuse to give it to them.

A friend of mine sent me a video late last night. Actually, I saw it this morning and it just amazed me. There is a... Most of you are probably familiar with the comedian, magician's pen and teller.

[3 : 19] Apparently, this video is viral on Facebook or something right now. He actually posted a few weeks ago a video and he was talking about that a young man, about his age, come up to him after his show and gave him a Gideon New Testament Bible.

Penn, Penn Gillette is his name, is a very staunch atheist. He says in this video that nothing on this planet could ever convince him that there is a God. Nothing. And so he's a very staunch atheist and this man came up to him, witnessed him, and gave him a Bible.

And he said this about it. He said he had no respect for Christians who don't try to proselytize. And this was shocking to me. He said, his exact quote was, How much do you have to hate someone to believe that eternal life is a possibility and refuse to tell them about it?

Charles Spurgeon said, Every Christian is either a missionary or an imposter. He also said, If there be one point in which the Christian church ought to keep its fervor at a white heat, it is concerning missions.

If there be anything about which we cannot tolerate lukewarmness, it is in the matter of sending the gospel to a dying world. So, folks, you don't have to go to another country to come in contact with that dying world. You can go to the grocery store.

[4 : 28] You can go to your job. You can go to school. Anywhere you go in this community, this community is full of dying people going to hell that need the good news. And it's our responsibility.

Open your Bibles with me, if you would, to Matthew chapter 13. I'm glad to have the opportunity tonight to open God's word with you. This, as I've recognized, is a church that loves preaching, that loves to hear the word of God and loves to be changed by the word of God.

And that's something that I see in Matthew chapter 13, as I was reading through it, something that is vitally important, the way that we receive the word of God when it's preached to us.

And so, it's a parable that Jesus gives that a lot of us are probably familiar with. And probably, if we grew up in church, we've heard it. Growing up, we know the parable of the sower and the seed.

And so, I just wanted to go quickly through that and look at it to see how important it is, the way that we receive the word of God when it's preached to us. So, obviously, we see there's the wayside seed.

[5 : 28] It's a hard seed. It doesn't penetrate the ground. The stony ground, it doesn't take root. There's seed that's spread among the thorns that takes root and grows, but it's choked out by weeds.

And there's also the good ground, that the seed takes root and grows and produces fruit. I'd really like to focus on those last two there, which are going to be in verse 22 and 23. It says, He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word, and the care of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.

For he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word and understandeth it, which also beareth fruit and bringeth forth some an hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty.

So, this passage really calls for self-evaluation. It causes us to consider the way that we receive the word of God when it's preached to us. The trouble isn't with the word of God.

The trouble is not the seed. The trouble is us and the way that we receive it, and whether we're hard ground or if we're fertile and ready for the seed to take root and bear fruit in our lives.

[6 : 32] So, we can proclaim all the day long that we, you know, that our heart is fertile and we love the preaching of the word of God, but if we don't see a change in our lives, if there's not a love for God, a desire to be holy, and a love for the lost world around us, then we really need to consider and evaluate what the word of God has really done in our lives.

So, with verse 22, where it says, the seed was received among thorns, they hear the word, and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches chokes the word, and it becomes unfruitful.

So, our natural tendency is not to want the things of God, and so it's going to be work for us. It's not going to be our natural tendency to want to do the things that Christ wants us to do.

The people that we see here are not people that necessarily rejected the word of God outright. I really picture them as like myself, growing up in church, and hearing the word of God, and I didn't reject it, I didn't say that, you know, I don't believe that at all, but it didn't do a work in my life until I was 18, and so I continued to go to church and, you know, act like a Christian, so to speak, but it didn't change my life.

It didn't really take root. It was choked out by the cares of this world, the things that I desired, the things that I wanted, and so that's what we see here. These are, these can be religious people that we would see as good people, but the word of God, when it's preached to them, it doesn't take root and bear fruit in their lives.

[8 : 03] The Bible says that no man can serve two masters, but I don't think that we always believe that. We think that we can hold on to the things of this world and also serve the Lord, but the Bible makes it clear that that's not the case.

If our minds are consumed with worldly pleasures and our comforts and things, then Christ becomes edged out and choked out by these other things that we hold so dear to.

The good ground, on the other hand, verse 23 says, he that received the seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word and understandeth it, which also beareth fruit. So they hear the word, understand it, and they bear fruit.

If the word of God is not bearing fruit in our lives, then we're deceived. We're really not, we're not accepting and the word of God is not working in us the way that it should, and we need to evaluate that in our lives.

We hear a lot of preaching, and the word of God is sown to us continually over and over again. We should be overflowing with fruitfulness. That should bear out in our lives because we get so much good preaching from the word of God.

[9 : 07] It should just overflow in our lives with fruitfulness, and we should want to take that to the world. So it saddens me that someone like me grows up and rejects the gospel for 18 years hearing it every week, and there are people all over the world who don't have an opportunity, who don't hear the gospel, and so we have a responsibility with all of the wealth that we have that God has given us to take that to the world and to share that with others that are around the world that don't have those same opportunities so that the word can do a work in their life, and so today I've examined my life to see what type of soil that I am, and it's been a process for me.

So in your heart before God, will you do the same today? Would you open your Bibles to Matthew chapter 22, Matthew chapter 22, verse 37. While you're turning there, a question to consider.

What is the greatest sin? I think a very simple answer could be that the greatest sin is breaking the greatest commandment.

And according to Jesus in Matthew chapter 22, verse 37, the greatest commandment, thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

So the greatest sin, breaking the greatest commandment, the greatest commandment is to simply love God with everything that is in us. To love him 100%.

[10 : 36] I don't know if I can say I've done that. You know what, I want to make one point here. Love is action, right? It's not just feeling and emotion, it is action.

But at the same time, I think we can say love is feeling, it is passion and emotion, and it manifests itself, it pours itself out into action. You can't have love without the two.

Miss Betty, when's your birthday? What month? So imagine February comes around and your husband does everything right, right? He takes you out to eat, buys you the flowers, the chocolate, he sits down and watches a movie with you that you like to watch, that maybe he'd rather not watch.

Imagine that happening. And then you ask, maybe not. Just imagine that. And maybe you ask him, maybe you ask him, why are you doing all this?

And he says, I have to. It's my job. It's my duty. It's not what you want to hear, is it? You want to hear that he loves you. And he loves to do things for you.

[11 : 44] Whatever he might do. I don't know if you might do that. He does things for you because he loves you. And it's the same thing with God. We do things for him. We obey him. We read his word.

We pray. We go to church and do all those things and share the gospel because we love him. And we love people. So where does this love of God come from?

What motivates us to love God like this? You know, our nature is not to seek after God, to love him, but he loved us first. And so we love him because he sent his son to die for us on the cross.

And that motivates us to love him. He showed us that great love. How can we not love him? He loved us with all of his heart, with all of his soul, with all of his mind.

We are commanded to do the same, to love him perfectly. But who here can really say, I have loved God perfectly? I'll speak for myself. I have not loved God with all of my heart, with all of my soul, and with all of my mind for even one second of my life.

[12 : 53] That's the truth. So we can never reach a point in our lives where we can say, I have loved God as much as I can, as much as I'm capable of, and I can't give him anything more.

There is always more love to Christ to give to him. Always more. He is worthy of more. So on this earth, we will not love him as much as we are capable of.

But in heaven, we will still not love him as much as he deserves. And that, I believe, is why heaven is eternal. Forever worshiping God.

Forever loving him. Because in a thousand years, a million years, all of eternity, and we will still not have given him all the love that he is worthy of. So remember, in this life, to love him, to seek after him, to love him with all of your heart, all of your soul, and all of your mind.

Turn with me to Joshua chapter 1 tonight. In Joshua, this is where I've been in my devotions, and I believe the Lord knew where I would be when I was here. But as we come through life, there are changes that are coming at you.

[14 : 01] Whether you know it or not, you don't have everything under control, you don't have all your ducks in a row, something's going to sideswipe you. You know, but when change happened, God was not surprised by that change. And we need to step up and say, God, whatever you want me to do, I'll take that change because I'm trusting in you.

Not my track record, but Lord, your track record is what I'm trusting in. In Joshua chapter 1, verse 1, it says, Now after the death of Moses, the servant of the Lord, it came to pass that the Lord spake unto Joshua, the son of Nun, Moses' minister, saying, Moses, my servant is dead.

Now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel. Here, life was changed all of a sudden for Joshua.

He's like, you know what? I've got this position. I know what I'm doing tomorrow. Whatever Moses tells me to. And all of a sudden, Moses is dead. He's like, man, I don't have the beard yet. It's not come in yet. I'm not sure if I'm really ready to step into his shoes.

But God said, I'm ready for you to step into that position. And we as God's people need to look at our lives and say, God, I'm nothing, I'm nobody, but God, if you'll use me, I step forward and I lay myself on the cross and I want to love you like you love.

[15 : 08] I want to serve like you serve. And God, I just believe that you will use me. But you know what? There's a time in our life when that step up moment comes and we say, God, I believe there's a need right there in my church.

Every time I come to church, I just see there's a need right there. God, you think maybe I could do that position? God, you think when someone comes to church, I can welcome them and love them and say, we're glad you're here? You think, God, you would use me for that?

Hey, God, you think you could help me clean up around the church? I come to church and there's a wrapper on the floor. God, you think you would allow me to do that ministry? And I would go ahead and answer, God will let you.

And then you say, God, there's that guy at work and he's always cussing. He's always telling the dirty jokes. Do you think, God, you would allow me to tell him your love story? God, you think you would allow me to do that? I'll go ahead and answer that.

God will let you do that. Hey, hey, hey, you think, God, you would allow me to teach some young boys the gospel of Jesus Christ at this church sometime? Maybe in a Sunday school class. God, maybe I'll have them come to my house and we'll feed them every Tuesday night and I'll just pour the word of God into them and trust you to do something.

[16 : 11] God, you think you would use me for that? I'm not Moses. My name's Josh. God, would you use me? And then God tells us here in verse nine, have not I commanded thee be strong and of good courage?

Be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed. For the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest. Hey, if you make a left turn or a right turn the wrong way, God's still there with you. But you want to turn and you want to look in the mirror.

You want to get up and you want to read God's word and when you can feel convicted, you say, that must be God telling me I'm over. I'm done with. No, that's the devil. God says, get up, get back into the word of God.

I've got a plan for you. I'm bigger than all of your mistakes. I'm big enough to love this world. I'm big enough to die for everybody and everybody can be saved. So let's take the gospel and take it to them.

Hey, coming Georgia needs Jesus. Alvareta needs Jesus. It doesn't matter if they grew up in this county all of their life, they still need Jesus Christ. It doesn't matter if they're a good old boy, they still need to hear this plain and simple good news story to them.

[17 : 09] And when we go to Indonesia, the same people are going to need to hear the same story. And we get the opportunity to serve God. You know, I believe that Joshua that day was scared to death.

That's why all throughout that chapter, God's like, hey, hey, be strong. It's going to get tough. The fights are coming. The battles are coming. The devil doesn't like it when you step up and say, here am I.

Send me across the street, across the office, or across the world. But if you'll do it, God's going to say, hey, I'm with you wherever you go. Hey, will you serve God? Will you say, God, I'll do whatever you want.

The book of Luke, chapter 12, Luke chapter 12, verse 35. The Bible says, let your loins be girded about and your lights burning. And ye yourselves liken to men that wait for their Lord when he will return from the wedding, that when he cometh and knocketh, that they may open unto him immediately.

Blessed are those servants whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching. Verily I say unto you that he shall gird himself and make them to sit down to meet and will come forth and serve them.

[18 : 15] And if he shall come in the second watch or come in the third watch and find them so, blessed are those servants. Verse 39. And this know that if the good men of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not have suffered his house to be broken through.

Be ye therefore ready also. For the Son of Man cometh at an hour when ye think not. You know, I just want to remind us in here today, I was reading through this in my devotions and the Lord just convicted my heart and he said, if someone were to come and break into this house right here and you knew, you and Emily were here but you knew exactly when he would come in, would you not just call your friends and would you not just get a whole bunch of people with guns to be standing here waiting on these criminals or had the police hidden in a bush right behind here waiting on them right when they came in there they go they're going to get arrested they're going to get stopped they're not going to be able to steal anything from our house they're not going to be able to take my wife if you knew this was the case what would you do?

And I just immediately got convicted I said, well I would call I was just talking to the Lord I would call everyone I would call everyone I could I would be like I have to be ready if I knew someone was going to come I have to be ready Jesus is talking here and he is going to come back Jesus Christ is coming again and I'm telling you it's exciting it's more exciting than any college football game any sports or anything that you get excited about we can get excited about the word of God who tells us Jesus he's no longer dead in the grave like Mohammed and all these other dead religions Jesus Christ is alive he's alive and he's coming back when we realize that Jesus is coming back here we need to have our lights burning look what he says there let your loins be guarded about and your lights burning we need to be ready for our Lord's return blessed are those servants who when he cometh shall find waiting shall find watching and waiting when we realize Jesus is coming back we need to first stop be divorced from being worried divorced from being worried there's many things if you want to worry about stuff I met some people that just worry about everything you can worry if you want to worry but the Bible says casting your cares upon him for he careth for you you know when you have cares you have worries in your heart you're afraid or you're worried about different things in this life we live in a crazy day and age but we don't have to worry we cast our cares upon him because he heareth us he cares about us he loves you in here today whatever your name is he knows how many hairs are on your head he loves you you're his child if you're saved he is a great God we realize Jesus is coming back we should be divorced from being worried we should be detached from being worldly we should awaken to righteousness and sin not for some have not the knowledge of God has fictus to your shame that's what the Bible says in first Corinthians there

Jesus is coming back and we have no time to be messing around dabbling in sin or anything of this world we need to have an eternal perspective we need to adjust our focus we need to acknowledge our father we need to have an eternal perspective we need to be divorced from being worldly detached from being worldly we need to be diligent while watching he could come back any day he could come back any second when I'm up here preaching he could come back at any time no man knows the hour we don't know the hour but Jesus gave us a parable remember the ten virgins who five of them were lazy and they just were they were just hooly hugging around and they didn't go and get oil for their lamps and the other five they were ready and when Jesus told them the wedding was coming all of a sudden they were ready they had their lamps oil in their lamps and they were able to go to the wedding but the other people they were like oh we forgot our oil how dare we man so they went they tried to get it but it was too late for them we as Christians we need to realize that we need to be ready we need to be ready there should be a sense of urgency in our lives we gotta get the gospel to the world why are we so passionate why do we preach the word of God why does our pastor let young men preach the word of God unlike most pastors in most churches because we realize there is a God who's coming back our king that we sing about

Jesus is coming back again and I can't wait I'm excited to see him and I want to bring as many people as I can with me how about you amen please open your Bibles to Romans chapter 12 verse 2 Romans chapter 12 verse 2 and Paul says and be not conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God now I understand that this is a very familiar verse to all believers we know this verse we know that Paul before this verse he gets through explaining to us salvation what has happened to us that Christ has died for us we believed on his name we've been given new life in him and this is the transition point where Paul says now this is your response right and so we know this but that's not that's not the struggle knowing is the easy thing the thing we struggle is with how to do it and so I want us to think about be not conformed what does that look like

[22 : 51] I remember when I was it was about a year ago when I was still in China I used to get up in the mornings and go to the Burger King nobody would eat there except me in the morning I guess the breakfast was not very good but anyway I'd sit there and I would just sit there and I would do my study and I would just watch people as they would walk into the subway entrance and you would see all kinds of people I could tell what they were doing they were going to work there were some students that were going to class there were some old people just kind of walking around but there was I mean but there was one guy I remember to this day there was one guy and he just looked really weird and he was walking he had his the bill of his hat was up like this and he was like doing the chicken thing and he had like and he was like I was like who is this guy look at this guy doesn't he look at the people around him isn't he looking at what other people are dressing like something is different about this guy and then I realized I thought now I know what it is he sees somebody there's somebody in his mind that he's trying to imitate it could be a sports star it could be a musician or somebody but he wants to be like that person and you know

I looked at that guy and he's not conforming to the world around him and so if you think about Christians you know I'm not saying we should be strange but that is in a sense the way we should be right we are walking not by sight we're not looking around and saying I need to be like this I need to dress like that I need to talk like that but we are looking we are walking by faith and in Hebrews it says that we are to keep our eyes upon Christ he is the author he is the he is our our leader he is the Lord and so in the arm in the mind's eye we need to be looking to Christ and we need to be walking after him Paul kind of repeats himself if you look in some other chap in other books to other churches he says to the Colossians he says set your affections on things above not on things on the earth and so how do we be not conformed you know the Christian life is very simple we can reduce it down to an affection Paul says set your affections when I when I sin against God it's because my affections are set on other things

I'm loving something more than I do God and so that's what we're supposed to do we just need to set our affections upon things above so let's do it okay alright amen please turn your Bibles to James chapter 5 and verse 16 look at the end of that verse with me I just want to take a couple minutes to encourage you guys tonight maybe someone's feeling discouraged your prayers are still heard and they still work God still listens to them and he still does something look at the end of verse 16 it says the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much I know that I've gone through times in my walk with God that I've been praying and it just it gets tiring I feel like I'm working hard I'm saying God won't you do this won't you do this and I'm going through this time and nothing happens and I'm saying God won't you save this person I love this person I want them to come to you Lord they don't know you they're going to go to hell and then they don't get saved and it's been it'll go years and years maybe you've been praying for some of your loved ones for a son or a daughter they've walked away from the Lord and you love them and you just want them to come back or maybe you're praying for the world you realize it's lost and it's dying and it's going to hell and he told us to pray for it but we don't have enough missionaries there's so many cities of millions and millions of people and we're learning

I learn about new cities and there's millions of people in them I just sometimes I get discouraged I'm like God I don't know of any missionaries that are going to that country let alone that city and I know they don't have churches and I know they're not hearing the gospel God what are you what are you doing why don't you just send somebody and I get discouraged about my prayers but this verse is an encouragement it says the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much and now you might think well a righteous man I've messed up and I'm not that good but we know from reading the bible what righteous means is that if you're saved you're righteous because you have Christ's righteousness so he listens to the prayers of his children he says come talk to me I want to hear you I want to answer your prayer so you think you're going through a dry time you think God you're not answering my prayers but that's not the case he hears them and he's going to answer them and he's going to do something big and look at the next verse and I want to remind you of a story it says Elijah was a man subject to like passions as we are and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain and it rained not on the earth it rained not and then it rained after three and a half years he's calling to mind the story of when Elijah was the last servant of God he was still standing still doing something for God all the other prophets all the other priests they had been cast out of the northern kingdom by Jezebel they were being killed and they were hunted down but Elijah still stood and he stood up to King Ahab and the hundreds of prophets of Baal on top of a mountain and he brought all the people of Israel to the mountain and he said today Israel you're going to see who your God is and you're going to see that he's real and Baal is nothing and that day is when the prophets of Baal they jumped on the altar they're saying

Baal hear us just bring the fire down on this offering so that we'll be saved but they prayed for hours and hours from the morning all the way up to the evening sacrifice and when they were done they realized it was hopeless Elijah came and he didn't have to pray for hours he just said God your children are far from you let them know today that you are the God in heaven and he prayed that prayer and fire came down in heaven and it didn't just burn up the sacrifice it burned up the altar and the wood and the water that was filling up the trench around the sacrifice because his God heard his prayers and he answered them and it's the same God that hears your prayers and he's going to answer them so God heard Elijah's prayers he's going to hear yours you're a righteous person if you're saved and he wants to hear your prayers and answer them amen amen