

The Exchanged Life

*The difference between a changed life
and an exchanged life*

*“For through the Law I died to the Law, that I might
live to God. I’ve been crucified with Christ; and it is no
longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life I
now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God,
who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me.”*

Galatians 2:19&20

by

Ed Miller

as edited by Janet Huhn

The scriptural timing of this series is the 40-plus days between Jesus' resurrection and ascension. The plus refers to the appearance of our Lord Jesus to the Apostle Paul seven years after His resurrection on the road to Damascus:

"I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins, according to the scripture, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas, and then to the twelve. After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now but some have fallen asleep; then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles; and last of all, as it were to one untimely born, He appeared to me, also."

(1 Corinthians 15:3-8)

Ed believes that, in this event, the Apostle Paul is the model conversion, illustrating for us the difference between the belief that our natures/lives can be changed and seeing that, instead, through revelation, our lives become exchanged—Jesus living His life in us, for us and through us. All Christians need to have the Damascus Road experience.

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“The Exchanged Life”

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The Lord Delights in You!

Ed & Lillian Miller

EDITOR'S NOTES

This book is based on a series of messages taught by Ed Miller at a men's retreat in 2010. The title of the four-part series is "The Exchanged Life". The exchanged life is a principle that is at the very heart and foundational to Ed's teachings – Jesus living His life in us, for us, and through us.

I have chosen to maintain, for the most part, the word-by-word transcription of these talks. Minor editing was used to omit redundancy and shorten long sentences. Grammar may be a bit "shaky" but I think Ed's personality, dry sense of humor and interesting terms of speech shine through by endeavoring to stick to the original transcript. This will also make it easier to follow along with the original audio recording while reading these transcripts, if you choose to want to do so. The recordings, the transcripts as well as this book can be accessed at: www.biblestudyministriesinc.com

Through the Holy Spirit, the revelation of Jesus' life in exchange for mine has given me the place to find enduring peace and rest in my heart, as I progressively walk out my salvation in Him centered in His will. I'm daily recapturing that glorious thrill of forty years ago when He first revealed Himself to me and I accepted Him as my life. My prayer is that all may come to live in the ongoing reality of the Lord's progressive revelation of Himself as their very life. May this little meditation series be an instrument for His doing so!

~ Janet Huhn

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1

Preparation for the Exchanged Life (Mary Magdalene)

WELCOME AND OPENING PRAYER

Good evening, brothers. It's good to be with you again, and it's our prayer that we'll behold our Lord Jesus. As we come to look in the word of God, there is one principle of Bible study that's indispensable, absolutely indispensable, and we can't take it for granted. Our natural hearts usually take for granted that which is most indispensable, and that's desperate when it comes to this book. That indispensable principle is total reliance upon God's Holy Spirit. Only God can reveal God, and He delights to do it; He longs to do it.

Before we go to prayer, I want to share just a little verse to get our hearts in the right direction. I think you are all familiar with the wonderful chapter, Ezekiel 36, because that is New Covenant from start to finish, and it's all the grace of God. Everything in there is unconditional and it's all "I will, I will, I will, I will," "I have sworn," "I am for you," "I will turn to you," "I will multiply," "I will cause you to be victories," "I will vindicate My holiness," "I will gather you," "I will sprinkle clean water upon you," "I will give you a new heart," "I will put a new spirit within you," "I will put My Spirit within you," "I will cause you to keep My statutes," "I will cause you to walk in My ways," "I will save you," "I, the Lord, have spoken, and I will do it, not for your sakes do I this but for My sake." All the way through, and when you come to the end of all that New Covenant and all that grace, we read,

"This, also, I will let the house of Israel ask Me to do for them." (Ezekiel 36:37)

So, He gives all the things He wants to do, and the last thing He says is, "I will let them ask Me to do that for them." Even though it's all by grace, He said, "Ask Me. If you want it, I'm willing to do it, if you will ask Me. I will let you ask Me to do all of that." So, let's just trust the Lord and ask Him to do what He longs to do. Let's pray.

Father, we thank You so much this evening for Your precious word and for the measure of the revelation of Christ that You've privileged us to see so far. We pray, Lord, this weekend that once again it would be Your pleasure to unveil Yourself. We do thank You for Your New Covenant heart, and all that You long to do for us, and we would ask now, this weekend, that You would fulfill that covenant for us. Minister unto our hearts, we pray, and unveil the Lord Jesus in a transforming way to our hearts. We do long to see Him, and we ask that by Your grace You would give us eyes to do just that. We commit our meditations unto You in matchless name of our Lord Jesus. Amen.

As I look around, I believe I've seen most of you before, and I think pretty much there might be a couple that are new. Let me just say two things by way of introduction. Number one, you'll see my Bible here and you'll probably think, "How come he never opens that thing?" Well, I have all the verses written down here in large print so that I can see the verses. I have opened it. And then you probably saw me come up with a big stack of paper. Don't get too frightened; there's not much written on every page; it's just so I can see it, and it's for your protection, so I don't go wandering.

I remember I was ministering one time, and we were in a little cabin and Dana was ministering, and some trucker with a big semi got lost, and so while we were singing and praising the Lord, this big old semi came pulling up to this cabin out in the woods. Dana looked out the window and said, "Ed, your notes have arrived."

JESUS' APPEARANCES BETWEEN THE RESURRECTION & ASCENSION

Let me share with you what is on my heart this weekend, and I pray that I have sensed the heart of the Lord in this. The portion of scripture that I'd like us to look at is actually very, very large. We're only going to have time to touch on a small portion of a large portion. If you think of it as a couple of acres of land, I'd like to show you that acreage, and then I'd like to go to one little corner and dig a little garden in that little corner. You need to see the whole field in order to see the little corner that we're going to dig, but I think by digging this little corner you will have an earnest of the whole field. That's what we're going to do.

The large portion of scripture I'm going to take the text from covers forty-one days. Some think it's forty-two or forty-three days, and I won't argue for that. I'm referring to the days between Easter and the

ascension of our Lord Jesus. I'm talking about those forty days. Listen, please, to Acts 1 as I read the first three verses.

**“The first account I composed, Theophilus, about all that Jesus began to do and to teach, until the day He was taken up to heaven, after He had, by the Holy Spirit, given orders to the Apostles whom He had chosen, to these He presented Himself alive after His suffering by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days, and speaking to them the things concerning the kingdom of God.”
(Acts 1:1-3)**

Those are the forty days, but we're going to look at forty plus one, or two or three. Where does the *plus* come in?

“I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins, according to the scripture, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas, and then to the twelve. After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now but some have fallen asleep; then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles; and last of all, as it were to one untimely born, He appeared to me, also.” (1 Corinthians 15:3-8)

The Apostle Paul mentioned the post resurrection appearances of our Lord Jesus that took place during the forty days from His resurrection to His ascension. Then in verse 6 he says, “Last of all, He appeared to me, also.” Evidently, he is referring to the Damascus Road experience. If that's so, the accepted Bible chronology of that is about 37 A.D. In other words, it's about seven years later. He lists those who saw him during the forty days; James saw Him, and Peter saw Him, and Mary

saw Him, and Thomas saw Him, and five hundred people saw Him. He lists them, and he puts himself in the list, even though it's seven years later. He said, "Last of all He appeared to me, as well." That's where I get the extra day. The forty days plus this day, some say that this revelation took two or three days; he was blind for three days. That's where they say it's maybe thirty-two or thirty-three days. You can take that however you want it. I want to look at that period of time.

Let me show you how large that field really is. During those forty-one days, our Lord Jesus appeared twelve times—six times to individuals and six times to groups. It's true, about several of those appearances we don't have much information about. For example, we know He appeared privately to Peter. That's all we know; we know He appeared to Peter. Maybe there is instruction in that. When a person has denied the Lord and is being restored, maybe it's none of our business what took place; maybe that's just between them and the Lord. I'm sort of glad there's not much information given there. He appeared to his brother, James, and that's all we know; we don't know much about that appearance, either. He appeared to five hundred at once. There are some ideas when that happened, but nobody is sure. Some people believe He appeared to five hundred different people who were not all in one group, but all over the place, and He appeared at one time as a foretaste that "every eye shall see it". I don't know. We know He appeared twelve times.

In some of these appearances He gives great detail. Clearly, on a weekend like this, we can't look at twelve different appearances. Before I focus on that small corner I want to dig, I want to share with you three suggestions. Why did He appear at all? Why didn't He just go up to heaven and send the Holy Spirit, and then go on with the program? How come He had to appear twelve different times? What is that all about? Let me make three suggestions. I'll mention the first two and then we'll leave it. I'll mention a third, and that's where we'll be this weekend; that's our little garden, that third suggestion.

He Appeared to Prove that He wasn't Dead, but Alive

Let me mention the first two. The first one we've already read,

“To these He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days.” (Acts 1:3)

King James translation says, “Many infallible proofs.” Kenneth Wuest says, “Many indubitable proofs.” The New English Translation says, “Many ample proofs.” One reason He kept appearing is to prove that He wasn't dead, but infallibly, by many infallible, many convincing, many ample, many indubitable proofs that He is not dead, but He's alive. Now, it's true that He only appeared to the elect,

“God raised Him up on the third day and granted that He become visible, not to all the people, but to witnesses who were chosen beforehand by God, that is to us who ate and drank with Him after He rose from the dead.” (Acts 10:40-41)

I speak as a fool, but if it had been me, I wouldn't have appeared only to believers. I think I would have knocked at the governor's door and said, “Hi, Pilate! Do you remember Me?” That's what I would have done. Or I would have gone to Herod's palace, “I've come to return your robe.” He didn't do that. I would have gone to the Praetorian guard and said, “Remember when you put a blindfold around Me and spun Me around, and you threw Me from guard to guard and you beat My face, and you said, ‘Alright, if you can see through that blindfold, then tell us who hit You.’? I did see through that blindfold.” I would have done something like that. I would have come to the proud Pharisees and would have gone to the priest's house and gone to the counsel of the Sanhedrin, and would have shown up at Annas' door or Caiaphas' door or something like that. But our Lord Jesus is wiser than I am, and He appeared to His children. He said that He appeared because He wanted to prove that He was alive.

We sort of read these things la, la, la. Many of His disciples needed infallible proof that He was alive. They took it hard; they were broken. The women just couldn't stop weeping. Mark 15:47 says that they were watching when Jesus was taken down from the cross. According to Matthew 27:61, when the great stone was rolled in front of the grave, the women just sat down there and they just wept until the sun went down. They were broken. Peter tried for six months to keep Jesus from going to the cross. That's when Jesus had to rebuke him and say, "Get behind me, Satan." Remember the Emmaus disciples, when Jesus showed up,

"While they were talking and discussing, Jesus Himself approached and began travelling with them, but their eyes were prevented from recognizing Him. He said, 'What are these words you are exchanging with one another as you are walking?' And they stood still looking sad." (Luke 24:15)

Why did they look sad? It's because they *were* sad, because He was dead.

**"We were hoping that it was He who was to redeem Israel."
(Luke 24:21)**

"Our hopes are gone; He's dead. We were hoping, but He's dead. We have proof; we saw His body. It was mangled. We saw it. We saw them take Him down. We watched as Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus anointed His body; we saw Him put in the grave. He's dead. It's over. We were wrong. He's not Messiah." That's one of the reasons He kept showing up, and He kept appearing. He's not dead. What a joy they discovered when He showed up! Remember how the Bible says that Jacob's heart revived when he learned that his son was not dead but alive, exalted to be lord, and the bread of life for the whole world? Do you remember the joy in his heart? See, that's what

happened. For forty days the news began to spread, “He’s not dead. He’s not dead. He’s alive. He’s not dead!”

He Appeared to Prove that He wasn’t Gone

Alright, hold that for a moment. There’s a second reason, I think, He kept appearing. It’s expressed in Matthew 28:18-20 but especially verse 20. I’ll read the whole thing...

“Jesus came and spoke to them saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I’ve commanded you.’” (And then He said this), “And, lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:18-20)

You see, those forty days were sort of a transition period, a transition between a visible, physical Savior, and someone who is going to be with them in an invisible way. They had to get used to that. “Lo, I am with you always, (even though you can’t see me, even though you can’t touch me, I’m with you).” Literally it is, “I am with you all the days.” In other words, there will never be a day in your life and never be a day in my life when He’s not with us. See, they had another problem. After they learned that He was alive, and He’s not dead, He’s alive, and He sits down with them and breaks bread, they see Him and He’s alive; He’s gone, He’s not dead, He’s gone. They’re walking down the street together, and He’s there, and all of a sudden He’s not there. They’re in a room and all the doors are closed, and He shows up, and He’s there; and then He’s not there; He’s gone. He kept disappearing. He’s not dead; He’s just gone. For forty days He’s here, He’s not here, He’s here, He’s not here, He’s here.

It came to a climax on the fortieth day. You remember the record...

“They had come together saying, ‘Lord, is it at this time that You’re going to restore the kingdom to Israel?’ And He said unto them, ‘It is not for you to know the times or the epochs which the Father is fixed in His own authority, but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you. You shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and in Samaria, even to the remotest part of the earth.’” (Now note this, brothers), “And after He said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on and a cloud received Him out of their sight, and as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was going, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them.” (And remember the message of the angels), “‘Men of Galilee,’ they said, ‘Why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.’” (Acts 1:6-11)

Put yourself in their shoes. “He’s not dead! He’s *NOT* dead! He’s alive! He’s gone. He’s here, He’s not here, He’s gone.” And then this one day, “He’s gone,” and a cloud comes and takes Him out of sight. “Men of Galilee,” the angels said, “why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.” Don’t think they weren’t waiting for Him to show up again. They were. That’s what they had been doing for forty days; “He’s here, He’s not here, He’s here, He’s not here.” I don’t know what those ten days were like. I know the Bible says that they were to gather in Jerusalem, and they did, and they were in the Upper Room, and we have a record of that. We have no record of their conversation. I think it went something like this, “Anybody see Him? Did He show up? Peter, did you see Him?” “No. Last time I saw Him a cloud took Him out of sight.”

“How about you, Andrew? Did you see Him? Thomas?” He’s gone, He’s gone, He’s dead, He’s not dead, He’s alive, He’s gone. Day one, day two, day three, week one, and I think they concluded He’s gone for good. I think that’s what they were thinking.

But you know the record, the wonderful day of Pentecost, the promise of our Lord Jesus to send the Lord in the Person of the Holy Spirit, and in that moment they entered into a discovery; He’s neither dead nor gone, but He’s alive, and He’s alive in me. What a day! What a discovery that they made that day; He is neither dead nor gone, but He’s alive and He’s alive in me; He’s neither dead nor gone but He’s alive and He’s alive in you; He’s neither dead nor gone but He’s alive and He’s alive in us. Glorious, glorious gospel! Although He’s been sitting at the Father’s right hand, He’s not far away. In fact, any closer He could not be; He’s in your heart and He’s in your life. He’s in my life. That’s a new relationship; God in me, God in you, that He’s neither dead nor gone, but that He’s very much alive and very much present and is now indwelling us by His Spirit; that was new to them.

We just sort of slap on all that we’ve heard and all that we know. For them that was brand new. They were used to sitting at His feet and looking at Him and hearing Him teach. They were used to having Him break bread. They were used to putting Him in the boat. They were used to Him going down and going to sleep in the boat. They were used to sitting on the grassy field and being fed by fish and loaves. They were walking in the grainfields with Him on the sabbath day. They were used to that. But that One, that same One that walked is now living inside of me? That’s new, and they had to be prepared for that.

He Appeared to Prepare Them for a New Relationship

I’m suggesting that the third reason of why He kept appearing and disappearing during those forty days, the first one is to show that He is not dead, and the second one is to show that He is not gone, and the

third one was to prepare them for the new relationship. They had to be prepared for a brand-new relationship. How do I relate? How can I have union with, how can I enjoy this One who is neither dead nor gone, but now alive, and alive in me? I'm suggesting that each of these appearances laid down a great principle of preparation. He had to get them ready for that.

Brothers, what I'd like to do this weekend, here's our little garden, and that's a big chunk of scripture. We can't look at all of that, so I've selected several records, and we'll look at the principle, how does this prepare me to have union with the indwelling Christ? And then how does this prepare me, and so on? I'm going to be speaking this weekend, and I'm going to give it the title, because what they learned when they learned that He's neither dead nor gone but very much alive and alive in them, is that there was a new life, an exchanged life. **See, we're so often thinking about the Christian life as a change. It is not a change; it is an exchange.** That's what they needed to be prepared to learn. We're going to be talking all weekend about the exchanged life. We're going to look at several stories and each one takes us closer and closer. He doesn't spell it all out in the first story. He just introduces it, and then He gives a transition to the next story, and then He lays out another principle. By the time we're done, it's all laid out.

Let me mention the stories we're going to look at, and then we'll begin looking at them. I want to look at Mary Magdalene because she's first. I just think that's important; she's first. So, at the end we're going to look at, "...last of all, He appeared to me," because he's last. So, we're going to look at that. But I want to show you how our Lord's appearance to Mary Magdalene laid out the great principle of how I can be prepared to relate to the One who has come, His life in exchange for mine. Then, I'm going to group a few of them together. I want to look at Thomas and the Emmaus Road and the Upper Room—not everything, just the big principle. We'll look at that, but I am most

anxious, brothers, to get to this, "...last of all He appeared to me." So, we are going to do two lessons on "last of all", one to explain the exchanged life and one to illustrate it, because he's last, and that's final preparation. The last thing anybody needs to know in order to relate to an indwelling Christ is spelled out in that experience. That's why that's last. It's not last literally, because He appeared to John after that, and so on. So, that wasn't last, but he said, "Last of all...", and it's last because it's final. **He's going to prepare us and prepare us and prepare us, and the final preparation is this; nobody can relate to the indwelling Christ without this preparation.** So, may God help us! You know where we are and you know where we are heading. This is what we'd like to look at this weekend. So, pray for me as we look at it, and pray that our hearts will really enter into this preparation. I'm going to start with Mary Magdalene:

"Now on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene came early to the tomb while it was still dark, and saw the stone already taken away from the tomb. So, she came and ran to Simon Peter and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved and said to them, 'They've taken away the Lord out of the tomb. We do not know where they've laid Him.'" (John 20:1)

I'm going to jump over the foot race between John and Peter and jump to John 20:10,

"And so, the disciples went away again to their own homes, but Mary was standing outside the tomb weeping. So, as she wept she stooped and looked into the tomb and she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and one at the feet where the body of Jesus had been lying. They said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping?' And she said to them, 'Because they've taken away my Lord and I do not know where they've laid Him.' When she had said this, she

turned around and she saw Jesus standing there. She did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?’ Supposing Him to be the gardener, she said to Him, ‘Sir, if you’ve carried Him away, tell me where you’ve laid Him and I will take Him away.’ And Jesus said to her, ‘Mary,’ and she turned and said to Him in Hebrew, ‘Rabboni,’ which means teacher. Jesus said to her, ‘Stop clinging to Me, for I’ve not yet ascended to the Father, but go to My brethren and say to them, “I ascend to My Father and to Your Father, to My God and to your God.”’ Mary Magdalene came and announced to the disciples, ‘I have seen the Lord,’ and that He had said these things to her.” (John 20:10)

Now, before I show you the appearance of the Lord Jesus to Mary and home in on that principle of preparation, if you have the New American Standard translation (I don’t know about the other translations), but if you have that you’ll notice an asterisk in John 20:1, and it says, “Mary came...,” and there is a little star, and then it says, “It was dark...,” and then there is a little star. And then it says, “She saw the stone...,” and there’s a little star. Well, if you look in the beginning of your Bible where it explains those things, it will tell you about the Greek historic present tense. We don’t have that in English, but they have it in Greek, and so they tried to mark it. In other words, it’s past tense; it was dark, she came, but actually the way it’s written is, “She is coming.” It’s present tense even though it happened, because God wants us to enter into this and get involved and put on the shoes, “It is coming.” You’ll see that asterisk in verse 2, in verse 5, in verse 6, in verse 12, in verse 13, in verse 14, in verse 15, in verse 16, in verse 17, and in verse 18. He’s making a point of it, and he’s telling it so that you enter into that, “And Mary is coming, and Mary is talking to Jesus, and Mary is running back to the house, and Mary is coming, and Mary is crying,”

even though it's, "Mary cried, and Mary came, and Mary ran," it's present tense. I just want to point that out. When you see that, the Holy Spirit is saying in a special way, "Make this present tense and enter into this."

Having said that, it's important to know who Mary is, and I'm speaking spiritually. You know that Magdalene was not her last name; we don't know her last name. It's not like Mary Smith and Mary Jones and Mary Russell; it's not like that. They say that Magdala is the place that she lived; that's her hometown. It's like Jesus of Nazareth. My name would be Ed Waterbury, Waterbury, Connecticut, you see. We don't know her last name, but because everybody knows her as Mary Magdalene, that's what she'll be this weekend.

As far as the record goes, there are fourteen different references to Mary Magdalene in the Bible. Though there are fourteen references, there are only three stories, and a couple of them are pretty short. When she first met Jesus, we have that story. When she stood at the cross, we have that story, and we have this one, Easter Sunday morning, when Jesus meets her. Now listen, please, to the first record in Luke,

"...and also, some women who had been healed of evil spirits and sicknesses, Mary, who was called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out." (Luke 8:2)

So, the only record we have of her is that she had seven demons in her body.

"...her sins, which are many, have been forgiven, for she loved much; but he who is forgiven little, loves little." (Luke 7:47)

Mary Magdalene was forgiven a lot; she had seven demons. I consider Mary Magdalene one of the largest lovers of Jesus in the Bible record. She loved the Lord Jesus. This is a saved woman. Seven demons and

she is delivered; she had been set free, she has been rescued, and she has been redeemed of seven demons.

It's a little bit unfortunate that chapter 8 and chapter 7 are so close together. The reason I say that is because in chapter 7 we read about an immoral woman, and remember she fell at Jesus' feet and poured the ointment and wiped His feet with her hair and tears, and so on? Because chapter 8 and chapter 7 are so close, they say, "That's the same woman, so Mary Magdalene was that immoral woman." We don't know that; it's not clear. I'm not suggesting that someone with seven demons might not have low moral standards. I'm quite sure if you have seven demons, you are capable of anything. I don't know. I'm just saying to give her the benefit of the doubt. We don't know. We know she has been wonderfully delivered because she had seven demons.

But we're concerned with Easter morning, John 20. She was given the highest honor that anybody on the planet ever had. Here's what I'm saying. This could only happen to one person. It couldn't happen to two; only one. Somebody had to be first. Somebody had to be first to see His form. Somebody had to be first to hear His voice. Somebody had to be first to get a commission from Him, and Mary Magdalene was given that privilege. I read this little rhyme; I don't know who wrote this poem:

“Not she with traitor’s kiss her Master stung,
Not she denied Him with unfaithful tongue.
She, when Apostles fled, could danger brave,
Last at the cross, earliest at the grave.”

PREPARATION #1: NO CLINGING IN THE FLESH

That poem is Mary Magdalene. How does our Lord Jesus by His appearance to Mary lay down in scripture the first preparation? He's neither dead nor gone; He's alive, and He's alive in you, and you need

to relate to Him. May God help us! I want you clear on the fact that Mary loved Jesus very much. She's not rebellious, and she's not a backslider. She's got to get a few things straightened out, but she's not a backslider. If anybody wants to get it right, she wants to get it right; she loves the Lord Jesus. She has been set free by the Lord Jesus, but she's not yet prepared to have union with an indwelling Savior.

Love of the Lord Jesus and gratitude is not enough. I think we've all been educated by the Spirit of God enough to know that it's not by works of righteousness which we have done; it's by grace. Nobody here that I know, nobody in this room would say, "I'm going to work my way to heaven." You aren't going to say that. You know that it's not by works, but you might have been burned like I have been burned when someone says, "It's not by works. You can't earn God's favor. It's out of love and gratitude." Let me give an illustration. Suppose I were to say, (and maybe you've heard this illustration because I've given it in several places, I can't remember where anymore), or God were to say to you, "If you can lift this two thousand pounds over your head, you can go to heaven," how many here think they'd win heaven by that? What if He said, "Alright, you can't earn grace. Do it just because you love Jesus; just do it out of gratitude and just do it out of a thankful heart, for all that He's done for you. It's the motive of your heart." Do you have any more ability to lift two thousand pounds because you love Jesus? See, that's what people were telling me and that's what I thought. They said, "No, don't do it by works. You can't earn it. Do it because you love Jesus." You are just as powerless to do it because you love Jesus as you were when you tried to earn your way. "Do it out of gratitude; do it because of all He's done for you." You need an exchanged life, and that's what Mary needs, as well. She is now going to be seen moving out of love, out of gratitude, out of her own life, and, oh, it's so desperate to see her.

One reason that Mary means so much to me is because reading her story is like reading my diary, my biography, looking in a mirror. I have been

burned so many times, the way Mary was burned here. Mary is a sincere lover of Jesus, and she had been truly redeemed, but she's not ready, and she needs another deliverance. We need to look at that. From what does a sincere lover of Jesus need to be delivered, so that they can be prepared to relate to Him? I believe the answer is in John:

“Jesus said to her, ‘Mary,’ and she turned to Him and said in Hebrew, ‘Rabboni,’ which means teacher. Jesus said to her, ‘Stop clinging to Me; I’ve not yet ascended to the Father. Go to My brethren and say to them, “I ascend to My Father and your Father, to My God and your God.””” (John 20:16&17)

I think that in that verse, “Don’t touch Me,” and the NIV says, “Do not hold onto Me,” we have the principle that we’re looking for. It's almost not fair because in Matthew 28:9 we read about the women after Mary separated from them, and they went on their way, and they saw Jesus, and the Bible says that they fell down at His feet and embraced His legs and embraced His feet. He didn’t say to the women, “Don’t touch Me,” but to Mary He said, “Don’t touch Me.” And then in Luke 24:39 when He appeared in the Upper Room, He said, “See My hands and My feet; come, touch Me.” “You can touch Me; put your hand in My glory wound.” You know in John 20:27 He said to Thomas, “Reach here your finger and reach out your hand and touch Me,” but to Mary He said, “Don’t touch Me.”

I reject much of what I’ve read about that—the idea of two ascensions, I don’t think so. They say, “I’ve not yet ascended,” and they say, “Well, He ascended and then He went up and He came down and He went back up again.” I can’t make that my own. I can’t accept what the commentator Paulis says, “Christ was still suffering from His crucifixion.” Listen to this, “Do not lay a finger on Me, for My wounds still smart.” No, we won’t go there. One of my commentators said, “Well, Jesus was alone with Mary, and that doesn’t look good; that’s a

bad testimony, ‘Don’t touch Me because it’s a bad testimony.’” That’s not what it’s about. Some would suggest that Mary had immoral feelings and suggestions toward the Lord Jesus. The Greek word is very powerful here. According to the Lexicon it means “to fasten oneself”, “to hang on”, “to grip”. Christopher Wordsworth, the Greek scholar, said, “The Greek word not only forbids clinging as an act; it forbids clinging as a habit.” That’s the word. Mary had been clinging to Jesus as a habit in the flesh, and Jesus was saying, “I am now ascending to My Father, and there is going to be a new relationship; you can’t cling to Me in the flesh anymore; there’s going to be a new relationship, and it’s not in the flesh but it’s in the spirit. It’s kind of what Paul said:

“From now on we recognize no one according to the flesh, and even though we’ve known Christ according to flesh, yet now we know Him in this way no longer.” (2 Corinthians 5:16)

Jesus was correcting this lover of Jesus to prepare her for that new relationship that she was going to have. I think it would be helpful to describe her present experience, so that we can see what she is being delivered from. In other words, we’ll just look at her story; we’ll look at her life. As we look at it, we’ll see a graphic illustration of someone clinging to Christ in the flesh. For the sake of analysis, I’ll break it down into principles, and I’d like to show three things it means to cling to Jesus in the flesh. We’ll just take her story. I’ll tell her story; and she was doing this and she was doing this, and she was doing that, and she needed to be delivered from doing this and this and this, so that she could be prepared to have a different kind of relationship with the One who is neither dead nor gone, but alive, and alive in her. May God help us to see this!

What does it mean to cling to Christ in the flesh? Let me state three different principles. Number one is this, illustrated by Mary, that

the focus was on her love for Him; the focus was on her serving Him. The sadness was that she could do that without His life because to her He was dead. So, she could serve Him without His life. In her thinking, He's dead. So, she begins to try to do exactly that. Another way to say it is that Mary, at that point, had come to the cross but hadn't gotten beyond the cross. You see that illustrated in Mary's life. She didn't get beyond the cross. That's all she knew, and because that's all she knew, that's all she expected. She expected to see Him exactly the way she had already seen Him. The last time she saw Him He was dead, and that was her full expectation. Luke 23 says that Mary was watching when they took Him from the cross.

She followed, the Bible says, when they anointed His body and put one hundred pounds of ointment on Him. She saw that. She knew the crucified Lord, and on that Sunday morning that's exactly who she was looking for. Let me word it another way, same truth; Jesus was dead to Mary. If you are going to serve someone who is dead to you, you are going to have to use your own life because you can't use His because He's dead to you. So, she's now serving out of her own life and experiences; she's attempting to because she loves Jesus, and she's thankful because He delivered her from seven demons. She's very much in love with the Lord; she's been redeemed and has been saved and she wants to serve Him.

“On the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene came early to the tomb and it was still dark, and saw that the stone had already been taken away from the tomb. She ran and came to Simon Peter and the other disciple whom Jesus loved and said, ‘They’ve taken away the Lord out of the tomb; we do not know where they’ve laid Him.’” (John 20:1&2)

Mary wasn't alone; those other women were there, too, but John homes in on Mary, and it's clear that she was expecting to find a dead Savior.

In verse 13, she tells the angels the same thing. In verse 15, she tells the Lord Jesus the same thing. She doesn't know it's Him, but she tells Him the same thing. Jesus appears, and she doesn't know who He is. Commentators try to explain that and say, "Well, He appeared in a different form." Is that why she didn't know Him? Somebody else says, "Well, she was crying, and her eyes were filled with tears, so she didn't recognize Him because she's looking through blurry eyes." Someone else says, "No, it's because it was still dark. It was early morning, and she didn't know who He was." And someone else says, "He appeared by the wall in the shadows."

I'll tell you why she didn't know who He was. I know why. It's because He was standing there. She didn't expect Him to be standing; He's dead. That's why she didn't know who He was. She was expecting a dead Savior. If He appeared laying on the ground, then she would have believed it. I think she would have been thrilled if she saw a body lying in the bushes. That would have made her happy because that's what she was looking for.

Brothers in Christ, I don't know if you can enter into this, but I've stood where Mary stood that day, in the presence of a living Savior that I didn't know was alive because Christ was dead to me, and I loved Him and I tried to serve Him out of my own life and experience. I was all wrapped up in His finished work. You could ask me about Christ crucified; I would have told you. "I know what He did and I know how He died. It's a finished work; when I die, I'm not going to hell and I'm going to heaven and I'm going to be with the Lord." I think we've all been there and attempted to cling to Christ in the flesh by focusing on our love to Him, happy to serve a dead Savior.

Hold that, please. **Let me give a second characteristic, clinging to Christ in the flesh. Not only having sort of a creedal grip, a theological, "I know He's dead, and I know the cross, and I know what He did for me," but she's trying now to explain everything**

apart from His life, “I don’t need His life to explain what’s going on.” So, she begins to rationalize and figure everything out. I don’t know what the angels looked like when they appeared to her. According to John 20:11-13 they were pretty bright and shining when they appeared to the other women, and they were frightened. When they appeared to the soldiers, they fell down as dead. It must have been a very dramatic thing. But when Mary sees the angel, it’s like talking to a mailman. It’s not dramatic. I don’t know if they changed their form for her or what, but she just can’t get past the cross. She doesn’t recognize His voice, and she’s explaining everything, and because she doesn’t need His life to explain things, she gets it all wrong.

For example, the stone was rolled away; is that good news or bad news? The stone is rolled away. That’s good news, but not to Mary; that’s bad news, “They’ve come, and they’ve stolen it, and they’ve taken Him away.” The stone rolled away threw her away into absolute confusion; she absolutely missed the point. She’s not getting anything spiritual here; that should be good news, but the only way it would be good news is if the life of Christ explained it; you need His life to explain the stone rolled away. If you don’t have His life, you are going to miss it; it’s going to be bad news. The only explanation that could have brought peace to her would have been His life.

Brothers, let me just try to apply that, and then move on. If your Christian life can be explained in terms of you, if you don’t need His life to explain what is going on in your life, if you can see the mark of the tools, “This happened because of this program,” “This happened because of these spiritual disciplines,” “This happened because I did this or I went there or these resources were given or this...,” if you can explain it, you haven’t understood the indwelling life of Christ. When He does it, the only explanation for your life is His life. It takes God to explain a Christian’s life. If your neighbor looks at your life and says, “Well, they like friends and I like friends, only they like religious friends. They like songs and I like songs, only they like religious songs.

They like to gather and I like gather, only they like to gather with religious people; they like to eat and I like to eat, only they like to eat with Christian people,” if they see your Christian life as just a religious hobby, and they can’t say, “The only way I can explain that life is God,” see, that’s what Mary needed. Right now she’s not understanding, she’s trying to serve a dead Christ, she’s trying to live out of her own resources, she’s trying to explain everything and everything is rational, and she doesn’t need God to explain it. She can explain it by some philosophical influence or by her own strength or favorable environment, or whatever. May God help us to get beyond this!

Let me give a final illustration and we’ll wrap it up. This is actually the chief evidence of clinging to Christ in the flesh. Clinging to Christ in the flesh is not only not needing His life to serve Him, and not needing His life to explain things, but she didn’t need His life for the power and the strength to serve Him. When I look at Mary’s life, she’s trying so hard out of love and gratitude; everything she did, according to the record, ended up in the trash heap. If you talk about somebody spinning their tires, this dear, dear saint who loved Jesus.... I have to admire her. I have to admire her on the level of earth because in John 20:1 she got up early while it was still dark. Some Christians have a hard time doing that. Just that much, getting up early for Jesus, that’s what she did; she got up early for Jesus.

Mark 16 says they brought spices to anoint the body of Christ. I don’t know how much sleep Mary got that night. I don’t know what is involved in getting spices ready. I don’t know how much sleep she got that weekend, and maybe even longer than that, but I know she worked hard because she loved Jesus, and she’s getting things ready, and she’s going to anoint the body. She’s never going to use that service. I don’t care how much time she put in. He’s never going use it; He doesn’t need the spices. She’s doing a service that is never going to be applied to the Lord Jesus. John 20:2, “She ran to Peter’s house.” According to the record, basically, it was something like this, all of the women come

on top of the hill and they look down and they say, “Oh, the stone is rolled away,” and Mary goes, “Ahhh, they’ve taken it away,” and she takes off that way, and they go down, and that’s when they met the angel and that’s when they left, but she just said, “I’ve got to run,” and now she runs to Peter’s house. So, she’s up all night, she’s working all night, she gets up there in morning, and now she’s running, and she runs all the way to Peter’s house, and they say, “They did what?” and Peter and John take off, and Mary is behind them. She’s running and running and running, and she’s crying, and she’s sad, and she’s weeping, she’s crying, she’s tired, and she’s exhausted. Why? Because she loves Jesus, and she’s serving Him with all of her might, and she is getting drained because she’s doing it out of her own life, and she’s trying to serve the Lord who she loves and who set her free.

“Jesus said, ‘Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?’ She supposed Him to be the gardener and she said, ‘Sir, if you’ve taken Him away, tell me where you have laid Him, and I will take Him away.’” (John 20:15)

Now she’s accusing Jesus of hiding Jesus on her. Before she said, “It’s them; they did it,” whoever “they” are; it’s always “them”, “they did it,” but now Jesus is blamed because she can’t find Jesus. Did you hear what she said? Dear Mary, you got up so early, and you worked so hard, and you got so tired, and you’ve run your little legs off, and you spun your tires, and you got a service in your head that you are never going to apply, and it’s all because you love the Lord Jesus. Now listen to you, Mary, listen, “Show me where you’ve laid Him and I’ll take Him away.” Yeah, right!

I don’t know how much Mary weighed. I get the idea she did a lot of running; she’s probably in pretty good shape. I don’t know how much she weighed, and I don’t know how much Jesus weighed. I guess He’s average weight. I know this, that when they wrapped Him and anointed

Him, there was one hundred pounds extra of spices, two hundred to three hundred pounds. Mary says, “Where did you lay Him? I’ll take Him away.” Can you picture that? Can you picture Jesus being lugged away by Mary, the lover of the Lord Jesus? She’s so tired and she’s so weary and she’s so weak. She’s been up all night and working her head off, working with others, getting up early, running her dear little legs off, coming back, crying her eyes out, and now she wants to burden herself with Christ; instead of Christ carrying her, she wants to carry Him. Don’t think that can’t happen. Christians are doing that all the time.

For seven years in my life I was lugging around a dead Christ, carrying Him to school, carrying Him to work, carrying Him to church, carrying Him to the prisons, carrying Him to the nursing home. I had no clue that it was His life, and that He wanted to come in, and that out of His life I could serve Him. I had no clue that His life would become the explanation of my life. I had no clue that His life would be the energy and the strength and the source of my service to Him. Alright, we end here. Jesus said to her, “Mary,” and she turned around and she said, “Teacher,” and she got taught something in that moment. You know what a name is for; that’s you, it’s you—this is about you. In a moment she had the flash, “He’s neither dead nor gone, but He’s alive.” The last words we hear of Mary in the scriptures is her saying, “I have seen the Lord,” and with that she walks off the pages of the Bible.

Principle number one, if we’re going to be prepared to have union with an indwelling Christ, someday, some way somehow, we’ve got to come to the place where it’s only about seeing the Lord. It’s not about ministry, it’s not about service, it’s not about anything else. We come to that place. Now that is preparation number one. He appeared twelve times. That doesn’t get it; that’s just the start. I’ve got to see what He showed Thomas, and I’ve got to see what He showed at the road to Emmaus, and I’ve got to see what happened in that Upper Room, and I’ve got to see, “Last of all, He appeared...,” and what that’s all about.

How am I prepared? Number one, you can't cling to Jesus in the flesh; you need His life. When God prepares His people to have that union, it starts here. They have come to the place where they say, "Teacher, I just want to know the Lord." That's it; that's the beginning. You are getting closer. Then we're going to move into that revelation.

Brothers, may God help us this weekend! You've probably heard it all your lives. If you are not settled in it, may God teach you this weekend, "What is this exchanged life and how can it be real in my life?" because I promise you this, He is neither dead nor gone, but He's alive, and He's alive in you! Let's pray.

Father, thank You for Your precious word. Thank You for this dear sister and her testimony, and how you set her free in a moment from her life, by showing her Your life. Do that for us, we pray. Prepare us to have this intimate union with the indwelling Savior. We ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

2

Preparation for the Exchanged Life

(Thomas, Emmaus Road and Upper Room)

WELCOME AND OPENING PRAYER

As we look again in this precious book and we seek again the revelation of our Lord, I remind you of that principle of Bible study that is absolutely indispensable, at that is total reliance on God's Holy Spirit. God has given us this precious book, God breathed, and He desires to breathe on it again. He wants to show Himself; He wants to show us the Lord Jesus. At the end of the day we must come as little babies, and just say, "Lord, we've been through the academics, we've done the word studies, we've looked at all that man's nature can bring us, but now we need Your illumination. Open our hearts, open our eyes, open

the word and unveil the Lord Jesus. That's what we need; only He can do that.

Before we go to prayer, I want to share a little verse that has touched my heart. At the end of Ezekiel 40 through almost the end, he has that great vision of the temple. It's called Ezekiel's temple. Some refer to it as the millennial temple, and some are not sure if it's literal or whether it's just spiritual/figurative, but whether it is or not, there's a detail that is given that's very instructive, I think, and as it describes this temple all filled with the glory of the Lord and it's spiritual dimensions, it describes the worshipper as they come into this temple to worship the Lord,

“When the people of the land come before the Lord at the appointed feasts, he who enters by the way of the north gate to worship shall go out by the south gate, and he who enters by the way of the south, shall go out by the way of the north gate. No one shall return by the way of the gate by which he entered. He shall go straight out.” (Ezekiel 46:9)

I know part of that is that God is a God of order, and that He is very orderly, and I think that's part of it, but I think there's also a spiritual principle, and that is that nobody who comes to worship the Lord in reality leaves by the same door by which they entered; we don't go out the same way that we came. When the wise men truly saw Jesus, the Bible says they went back by another way. Let's just trust the Lord to show us Himself, and then take us out by a different door. Let's pray...

Our Father, once again we thank You. Thank You for gathering Your children this weekend in this place, and we just pray as we touch Christ in each other, as we fellowship together, as we look in Your word, as we lift our ear toward heaven and desire to hear a word from You, that you would indeed unveil the Lord Jesus to our hearts in a living way. Take us individually and corporately in a forward step in the heart

knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. We trust You for this and we thank You in advance that You are doing it, and that You are going to continue to do it. We look to You now in these moments of meditation, and pray that You would protect our brothers from all that's flesh and blood and all that's from man, and that You would be pleased to reveal Yourself. We ask in Jesus' precious name. Amen.

REVIEW

Well, I think as you know, or you will know now, this weekend, our theme, I've just called it "The Exchanged Life". God has been burning that reality in my heart for some months now. Another way to say it is, "Union with the risen and ascended Savior, who has come to indwell us, who lives in our hearts; union with Christ, life from heaven for life on earth—the exchanged life.

To get this before our hearts, we're looking at a block of time that we're calling forty days plus, plus one or two or three; it depends on how you look at it. I'm speaking of those forty days between the resurrection of our Lord Jesus and His ascension into heaven. During that forty days, eleven times He appeared and disappeared to some of His disciples. Theologians call that the post resurrection appearances of our Lord Jesus. Obviously, in an abbreviated weekend like we have, we can't look at all eleven appearances; I don't have light on all eleven, anyway, and many of them aren't even revealed.

I said forty plus one or two or three. Let me read that scripture again where we get that plus one:

"I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the scripture, and that He was buried and that He was raised on the third day according to the scripture, and that He appeared to Cephas and then

to the twelve and after that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep. And then He appeared to James, and then to all the apostles,” (and here’s the verse), **“Last of all, as to one untimely born,”** (and that expression I’ll touch on in another connection is the word *abortion*), **“as to one aborted, he appeared to me, also.” (1 Corinthians 15:3)**

I’m calling attention to this because it’s about seven years later. He appeared after His resurrection eleven times and then seven years later He appeared to the Apostle Paul on the Damascus Road, and Paul puts himself in the list. He appeared to Mary, He appeared to Thomas, He appeared to Peter, He appeared to James, He appeared to five hundred, and He “appeared to me”. He said, “Last of all...,” and we know literally he wasn’t last. He appeared other times. He appeared to John on the Isle of Patmos, and so on. How could Paul put himself in the list? He wasn’t there. Why did he say, “Last of all...,” when he wasn’t last? I’m suggesting that this is the final preparation; it’s last of all in terms of final.

Last night, and I’ll just sort of mention this, and then we’ll move on, we looked at three possible reasons for His post-resurrection appearances. Number one is in Acts 1, that by many infallible proofs He might show Himself alive; He appeared that He wasn’t dead. That’s the first reason He appeared; He is not dead—He’s alive. The second reason is that He kept disappearing. They were used to seeing Him with these eyes (natural), but now it’s going to be different. They are going to have to be related to an invisible God, and He was getting them used to that; He’s there, He’s not there but He’s still there, He’s in the room but we can’t see Him and then He shows up and He’s there. They were thinking that He’s not dead, but He’s gone. He was about to teach them that He is neither dead nor gone, but He’s alive and alive in me;

He's alive and alive in you. They were to learn that new truth at Pentecost when He came in the Person of the Holy Spirit to baptize His church, to baptize His people, and to come and live in them in a new way, a living way—His life for their life. I'm suggesting that He appeared during these forty-one days to show that He wasn't dead, to show that He wasn't gone, and here's where we are this weekend, to prepare them.

Those appearances are preparation. They needed to be prepared for a union with an indwelling Christ they knew nothing about and never experienced. The One that used to stand in front of them is now going to live inside of them. His life is going to replace their life. They knew nothing about that. God used these appearances to prepare them for that wonderful union that they were about to have. What we're doing is that we've selected several of these appearances, so that we can behold that preparation, "How does this prepare me for that union? And how does this experience prepare me?"

I'm very anxious to get to, "Last of all He appeared to Me." It's last because it's final, the final preparation. After we learn what Mary has to teach us and what Peter has to teach us and what Thomas has to teach us and what the Emmaus Road has to teach us and what the Upper Room has to teach us, and we've learned those principles, Paul says that you need to know one more thing. Without this you'll never enter into that vital union, that I'm neither dead nor gone but alive and alive in you. You need this final preparation. **Every Christian needs the road to Damascus. We need that; that's final preparation.** If you miss that, you'll struggle all your life trying to understand the exchanged life. We need that final preparation. "So, last of all, as to one who is undeserving, one who looks at his life, his past life as nothing but an abortion, last of all by His mercy He appeared to me." God tells his story so that we might have the final preparation.

Last night we looked at the first story of Mary Magdalene, and the principle, I think, is in John 20:17 when our Lord Jesus said, "Stop

clinging to Me.” She had been clinging to Him in the flesh, and she needed to be cured from that because in the new relationship, in the new union, there would be no clinging in the flesh. Our Lord Jesus, by His great mercy, didn’t touch her and He didn’t hold her hand and He didn’t give her chills or goosebumps and didn’t put His hand on her shoulder and didn’t knock her over. He just said, “Mary.” And she said, “I see it! Teacher, you’ve taught me. I’ve seen something wonderful; it’s a spiritual revelation.” She ran back to the disciples and the last recorded words of Mary Magdalene in the Bible are, “I have seen the Lord,” and with that she walks off the pages of the scriptures. “I have seen the Lord.” Preparation number one, if I’m going to understand this union I cannot be like Mary. She was finally delivered. She did not know His life. To her He was dead, and it was her life, and she was pouring out her ministry and her life. By the revelation of His life, she was set free from her life; it was an exchange. It was no longer her life serving Him. It was no longer her life explaining circumstances. It was no longer her life, the source of energy and strength. Now she had seen His life. That’s not all the eggs; that’s just the first step in preparation toward this great truth that I’m calling the exchanged life. So much for review.

BACKGROUND OF THOMAS

That brings us this morning, then, to the second story I want us to look at, and that is the appearance of our Lord Jesus to Thomas. How does His appearance to Thomas prepare our hearts and take us forward in that preparation so that we can have a living union with the One who is neither dead nor gone but alive, and alive in us? Before I look at the spiritual principle, let me give you the background. I’m sure most of you know all of this but if I state it we’ll all be together. If you want a record of Thomas you won’t go to Matthew. If you want a record of Thomas you won’t go to the gospel of Mark. If you want a record of Thomas you won’t go to the gospel of Luke. They mention him but

that's all they do; they just say his name, "He's one of the twelve." So, if you want a record of Thomas you've got to go to the gospel of John, and like there were three stories of Mary Magdalene, there are three stories of Thomas. One is in John 11 when Jesus decides to go to Jerusalem, "Let's go and die with Him." There's that little story. And then there's a story in John 14 where Jesus said, "I am the way, and you know the way," and Thomas said, "How do we know the way? We don't know the way." And then we have this here in John chapter 20. I'm going to pass over the first two stories, though they are instructive.

"So, when it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and when the doors were shut where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and He said to them, 'Peace be with you.'" (John 20:19)

"But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came." (John 20:24)

Well, you know the record is that it is Easter day. This is Easter morning, and as far as we know, most commentators would agree that this was his fifth appearance. He only appeared eleven times in forty days, and five times on day one. We know He appeared to Mary Magdalene, and we know by this time He had appeared to the women, and we know He appeared to Peter, and we know that He appeared to the two disciples on the Emmaus Road, and we know that now He appears to the ten disciples, Judas, of course, being absent, and Thomas being absent. You remember the response of Thomas,

"And so the other disciples were saying to him, 'We have seen the Lord,' but he said to them, 'Unless I see in His hands the imprint of the nails and put my finger into the place of the nails and put my hand into His side, I will not believe.'" (John 20:25)

It's because of that statement that he has received the great appellation, "Doubting Thomas". Most people know him as "Doubting Thomas". That's not really fair, but that's how it is. I say that because he expressed his doubts, there's no doubt about it, but according to the record they all doubted. Listen as I read these verses.

"And when they saw Him, they worshipped Him, but some were doubtful." (Matthew 28:17)

"Now after He had risen early the first day of the week, He appeared to Mary Magdalene from whom He cast seven demons. She went and reported to those who had been with Him while they were mourning and weeping. When they heard that He was alive and was seen by her, they refused to believe it." (Mark 16:9)

"After that, He appeared in a different form to two of them while they were walking along on their way to the country. They went away and reported it to the elders, but they did not believe them either." (Mark 16:12)

"Afterward, He appeared to the eleven themselves as they were reclining at the table, and He reproached them for their unbelief and hardness of heart because they had not believed those who had seen Him after He was risen." (Mark 16:14)

"Now, there were Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and also other women with them, and they were telling these things to the apostles, but the words appeared to them as nonsense, and they would not believe them." (Luke 24:10)

**“While they were telling these things He Himself stood in their midst and said, ‘Peace be to you.’ They were startled and frightened and they thought they were seeing a spirit. He said to them, ‘Why are you troubled? Why do doubts arise in your heart?’”
(Luke 24:36)**

And in another place, it says, “They believed not for joy.” Isn’t that interesting? It was too good to be true. It’s a terrible thing not to believe, but to believe not for joy, and that’s what happened. They were all unbelievers. So, Thomas wasn’t the only doubter, and maybe he wasn’t even the greatest doubter, we don’t know, but he was selected by God to represent doubters. So, we have his story because of his comment, “I’m not going to believe unless I can put my finger in His glory scars, and unless I can reach my hand and put it into the wound in His side.”

It’s important to remember that Thomas was a disciple; Thomas was a believer. In fact, Jesus said to him,

“Do not be unbelieving but believing.” (John 20:27)

“You see, and therefore you believe.” (John 20:29)

So, Thomas was a believer, but there is such a thing as an unbelieving believer. There are unbelieving unbelievers but there are also unbelieving believers, and Thomas is one of them. Every time he’s mentioned in the list, he’s always mentioned along with Matthew who is called Didymus, and that means twin. Many think that Matthew was his twin. We don’t know for sure, but he’s always mentioned with Matthew. The point is that he’s a believer, and as a believer he is an unbelieving believer...

“Jesus said, ‘Because you’ve seen me, have you believed? Blessed are they who did not see and yet believe.’” (John 20:29)

Thomas had a problem, and as Jesus had to correct Mary's problem in order to prepare her for this revelation and union with the indwelling Christ, now in step two, God is going to correct Thomas' problem and lay down in the Bible a great principle of preparation. I need Mary's revelation; it's not by the flesh, and I don't cling in the flesh. I need His life; I need to see Him; I need to see the Lord. But Thomas, also, had a problem. Thomas' problem clearly had to do with sight. I think we can all agree on that. He had this idea, "If I only had sight, that would help my faith." That was his idea, that sight helps and if I had sight, it would be easier to believe. So, he said, "I want sight."

I think we've all been there. Thousands of Christians have that idea, "If only God would do something spectacular, if I could see Him working, if I could see Him moving, if I could see Him delivering, if I could see Him healing, if I could see Him providing, if I could see Him opening a door, if I could know that it's God, if I could see, it would help, and that would help my faith." I remember as a young Christian that I went right through the sight thing, "If you are real, blink the lights." You just want some evidence, some empirical sign that God is real.

Here's one proof that sight can't help faith. Thomas had this idea, "If I can see Him and I can see His scars and if I could touch Him, if I could put my hand in His side, that will help me have faith." So, Jesus shows up in front of him, and He invites him, "Put your hands, put your fingers there." There's no record that he ever did it, but he was invited to do that. Let me ask this, did that help his faith? Think about it. What Jesus said when he showed up is, "You think seeing Me is going to help your faith? Now you see Me; you don't need faith; here I am, touch Me. You have sight, and now you don't need faith. Sight doesn't help faith. That's why it's over against faith. We live by faith, we walk by faith and not by sight; it's the opposite. Sight cannot help faith, even a little bit. Thomas did not yet understand the invisible presence of the

Lord. He said, “If He’s alive I’ve got to see Him with these eyes,” and the Lord is going to correct that because sight does not help faith.

Let me give an illustration from Thomas’ life:

“The other disciples were saying, ‘We’ve seen the Lord,’ and he said to them, ‘Unless I see in His hands the imprint of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails and put my hand in His side, I will not believe.’” (John 20:25)

Remember that when Thomas said those words, it was private, “Don’t put that on the email, don’t tell anybody, and don’t put it in a bulletin. That’s private and it’s between me and you. Here’s how I feel about it.” He was with his Christian brothers. They said, “We’ve seen the Lord,” and he said to them in private, “Yeah, I’ll believe it if I can touch it, and I can see it, and until then I’m not going to believe it.”

Well, eight days go by, and this time they gather again but Thomas is not absent,

“After eight days his disciples were again inside, and Thomas was with them. Jesus came, the doors having been shut, and stood in the midst and said, ‘Peace be to you.’” (John 20:26)

I imagine that all of their jaws almost hit the floor when He showed up in the room. Then Jesus shocks Thomas. Verse 27, now picture this, enter into these stories,

“And He said to Thomas, ‘Reach here your fingers and see my hand. Reach here your hand and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving but believing.’” (John 20:27)

Don’t just read that la, la, la. How would you feel if you were Thomas? I’d be a little embarrassed and I think I’d be a little angry. I’d look

around at the brothers and say, “Who ratted on me? Who told Him? Matthew, did you tell Him? Andrew, was it you? Peter, you big, mouthed Peter; I know it was Peter.” Thomas, nobody told Him; He was there when you said it. He was invisible, He was listening, and He was present, but you didn’t see Him. You need to understand an invisible Lord, Thomas, and even if you hadn’t said it, even if you just thought it, He was there and He heard and He knew. You couldn’t see Him at that moment, and you couldn’t hear Him, and you couldn’t touch Him, and none of your senses would have done anything, but He’s there, and it’s this life, Thomas. That you need to understand, and it’s this life that every Christian needs to understand, if they’re going to understand the exchanged life.

In passing, let me just say this. I think it was tremendous that our Lord Jesus heard Thomas and dealt with him in this way. Thomas thought that sight would help and that he needed sight. Jesus is so kind. I think every time we’ve been together, I have shared this principle, so I’ll just keep sharing it. I don’t know a truth that has meant more to me than this; God always deals with us where we are, and not where we ought to be. He always meets His people where they are, in order to take them where they ought to be. As we are, where we are, and that’s where God meets us. Thomas needed to learn a great lesson, that sight is not going to help faith, that he can stand on the reliable testimony of reliable witnesses, and that he doesn’t need to see.

It’s so precious here. Jesus doesn’t blast him or come up and say, “What’s wrong with you? You are just an unbelieving believer. Grow up!” He doesn’t say that at all. He has a great need and Jesus meets him here. He doesn’t come up and point His finger in his face and say, “Shame, shame, shame on you. Sight, you’re so subjective. Why don’t you get out of that? You should have faith without sight. That’s what I wanted, and you didn’t have it. There’s no hope for you.” Brothers, Jesus will never call you dumb. Jesus will never call you stupid. Jesus will never call you slow. Jesus will never scream at you and say, “Grow

up you little baby; stop being so subjective! Why don't you get rooted in objective truth and take a rugged stand." He'll never do that. Whatever you are, wherever you are, whatever your need, He'll show up and meet you right where you are, not because you are in a right place, but to lay down His great truths and to take you to the place that one day you can enjoy His life for your life, the exchanged life. He deals so wonderfully with Thomas here.

PREPARATION #2: IT'S NOT BY SIGHT BUT BY FAITH

THOMAS

That's enough background. Let me try to give you the principle. I won't read the record again, but you know the record. Here's the question that I ask, "What is Thomas' contribution to the history of redemption?" Or to say it another way, why did God tell us his story? Why did God put this in the Bible? What principle do we get here that we wouldn't get in another story? What is the Holy Spirit focusing on? Why did God tell us this story? What's the distinctive message of the life of Thomas?

As I went through my commentaries, there were many suggestions. Some say that God told us the Thomas story because he represents all doubters in the world. In other words, because of Thomas, those who are agnostic say, "I don't know," and those who are sceptics, those who are cynical, those who are subjective, those who are inclined to need sight and need feelings and need emotions, this story just encourages them. That's why God gave us this story, to encourage doubters. Well, I think that's part of it, and bless God for that because I think we've all been there. I have had honest doubts. I've also had dishonest doubts. I've had many doubts, and God meets the doubter. So, praise God for this story because it does encourage doubters.

I think it's bigger than that. Some say that God tells us his story because he represents those who are a day late and a dollar short. For those of you who are older, years ago there was a television program as I grew up and I used to enjoy it. It was about a detective named Maxwell Smart. Some of you are smiling; you remember that. The name of the program was "Get Smart". He was this blundering detective that always did things wrong and ended up doing things right. He had a saying. He would squint his eyes and he'd point his finger and he'd say, "I missed by that much." Thomas, "We've seen the Lord, and you weren't there." "Ah, I missed it by that much." There's always that person who is a day late and a dollar short and it's frustrating. I've been there. The people in front of me getting blessed by the Lord, and the people in back of me getting blessed by the Lord, the people on both sides of me are getting blessed by the Lord, and you are going, "Hello, how about me?" It's not that you resent their blessing or even that you hold their testimony in suspicion, but they're claiming all of this and testifying about a great deliverance, and they're telling about a mailbox miracle, and telling about doors that God has opened up, and opportunities He's provided, and circumstances that He has supernaturally engineered, and amazing things coming together, and you're going, "Praise God for you," and in your heart you're saying, "How come, Lord, everybody around me gets blessed and I'm never there?" Some think that's Thomas, always seeing fruit but it's in somebody else, and they're always the ones getting blessed. They come to you and say, "You should have been there; you should have seen it. What an experience!"

Well, I think Thomas does offer a great contribution to spectators and those who seem to be always missing it, left behind, and everybody is getting rained on and they're just dry and empty and hoping that, "Well, maybe next time I'll be there." Thomas does minister to them. But I don't think that's his contribution. Praise God for what hope he gives to doubters, and praise God he gives hope to those who seem to be always left out, but that's not the chief contribution of his life.

Then there are those who say that he's God's warning to those who dare miss a meeting. John 20:19 tells us that he was not there when Jesus came. He missed the meeting, and the idea is, "See what happens when you don't show up? Whose fault is that? You could have been there." Well, give him a break; it was an evening meeting. I'm kidding. I'm not suggesting that we ought to miss the assembling together, but I don't think that's the Holy Spirit's point here at all. It is true that he missed the meeting, but it isn't because he didn't gather with the saints. Saul of Tarsus was not gathering with the saints when God appeared to him. In fact, what was he doing to the saints? It's the opposite of gathering with the saints. That's not why. It's not only to encourage doubters and those who seem to be always missing out, and warn those who neglect the assembling together, and don't get me wrong, they need warning. That's part of it. But there's another contribution, and let me state it for you, and then we'll try to look at the principle.

I believe God was giving Thomas one of the greatest privileges, more than the other ten. I think he missed it, but God was giving him a privilege to represent the church in all ages. He let it slip away but he was more honored than the rest. You see, how do you know Jesus? How do I know Jesus? Let me suggest how you don't know Him. I don't think He calls out your name in a garden like He did for Mary. Maybe some of you have had that; I haven't had that. I don't think as you are walking down the street He suddenly shows up and gives you a Bible study. That's not how you know Him. I don't think He shows up in a room that's all closed and when you're in your closet. I don't think He meets with you out in the open air. I don't think He walks with you in a grain field. We don't see Him, and we can't touch Him; we can't relate in that way. We don't hear His audible voice. Every one of the disciples knew Him that way, and God said, "After the Bible is done, they aren't going to know Me that way anymore." Somebody has to illustrate that. Somebody has to know Him the way we know Him, not by sight but by faith, "Blessed are those who have not seen." That's how we have to do it, and He selected Thomas to show that.

See by Faith Through Testimony of Reliable Witnesses – Our Bible

Everyone in the Upper Room had experienced the first part of verse 29, “Because you’ve seen have you believed?” They all could say, “Yes, indeed, because we’ve seen we’ve believed,” but only Thomas was given the privilege for the second part of that verse, “Blessed are those who have not seen, and yet believed.” Thomas stood where we stand today, seeing the Savior by faith. Thomas insisted on sight, so he lost the great privilege that he could have had, and that is believing the testimony of reliable witnesses. What witnesses did Thomas have? He had Mary, he had the group of women that met the Lord Jesus, he had the ten disciples, he had the two Emmaus disciples. They weren’t liars; he had those reliable witnesses. What do you have? You’ve got the testimony of Mary, you’ve got the testimony of the women, you’ve got the testimony of the apostles in the Upper Room, you’ve got the testimony of the Emmaus disciples. When Thomas had that testimony, they were his friends. When we have that testimony, it’s Bible. His friends have become our Bible. His reliable witnesses are now inspired reliable witnesses. Thomas is taking us forward in this whole idea; we have the same witnesses he had, only now it’s inspired. We have the Bible.

What is happening here as God lays out these principles is that Mary says, “You must see the Lord.” Thomas takes us another step; you must see the Lord by faith based on the testimony of reliable witnesses which is going to become your Bible. You’ve got to see the Lord in this book. God is taking us forward and He’s preparing us. How am I going to relate to the One who is neither dead nor gone but alive and alive in me? I need to see Him, by faith, on the basis of reliable witnesses which will become the Bible. It’s not spelled out perfectly in Thomas but it’s a step towards that direction.

John 20:29, “Jesus said, ‘Because you’ve seen Me have you believed? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe.’” Thomas thought sight would help faith; he was wrong. Sight doesn’t help faith.

He thought that. And then Jesus showed him when He appeared, “You don’t need faith now because you have sight.” Then Jesus did something else. This is so amazing...

“Thomas answered, ‘My Lord and My God!’” (John 20:28)

Understand what’s happening here. Thomas said, “I need to see with these eyes (natural).” Jesus said, “Those eyes won’t help you. I’ll prove it. Here I am. Now you see Me with these eyes, but it hasn’t helped your faith. You don’t need faith because you have sight. You don’t need faith. And then all of a sudden God opened these eyes (spiritual) and he saw Him, not with these eyes (natural) because you can’t see the Lord with these (natural) eyes, and you can’t see God with these (natural) eyes. And when he said, “My Lord and my God,” he had a revelation (spiritual) that these eyes (natural) can never give.

God was saying, “Blessed are those who don’t need sight.” We know according to 1 Corinthians,

“No one can call Jesus Lord in reality except by the Holy Spirit.” (1 Corinthians 12:3)

and Thomas had that great privilege and now the Lord is saying to Thomas, “It’s not these eyes (natural),” and Mary said, “I must see the Lord; I’ve seen the Lord.” Thomas said, “I must see the Lord by the eyes (spiritual) of faith through the testimony of reliable witnesses. It’s another step forward. He’s preparing us. You say, “Well, I’m ready then. Now I can relate to the Christ within.” Ah, not yet. He said, “I’m going to prepare you. You need to see the Lord, and you need to see the Lord by faith, and you need to see the Lord by faith in this book based on inspired, reliable witnesses.”

PREPARATION #3 – BIBLE REVELATION OF JESUS

EMMAUS ROAD DISCIPLES

Let me try to wrap all this up. I'm not going to develop the stories; you know the stories—Luke 24, the Emmaus Road. Those disciples are you; those disciples are me. Those disciples are us and they represent us, and they were in that position, you remember in verse 21 that they were hopeless, “We had hoped it was Him,” and they were sad and they were grieving. You know the story. Let me call attention to two wonderful truths and we'll wrap it up.

**“Their eyes were prevented from recognizing it.”
(Luke 24:16)**

“Beginning with Moses and with all the prophets He explained to them all the things concerning Himself in all the scripture.” (Luke 24:27)

**“Then their eyes (spiritual) were opened, and they recognized Him and He vanished from their sight.”
(Luke 24:31)**

“Then He opened their minds to understand the scriptures.” (Luke 24:45)

“And they said, ‘Were not our hearts burning within us while He was speaking to us on the road while He was explaining the scriptures to us!’” (Luke 24:32)

Mary says, “You need to see the Lord.” Thomas said, “You need to see the Lord by faith based on the reliable witnesses who have become your Bible.” And now on the road to Emmaus it lays out another step, “I need to see the Lord, I need to see the Lord by faith in this book, but now I need God to open my eyes (spiritual) to the revelation that's in this book. I need Him to open my understanding and show me Christ in all of the scriptures.” Again, I try to put myself in; try to picture this.

Our Lord Jesus has just accomplished redemption, and our Lord Jesus had become sin for all mankind and He bore the curse of sin, hell, death, judgment and finished the wrath of God, and satisfied His Holy Father God, and exhausted the anger of God, and satisfied the Law, glorified justice for all time, and He has just conquered Satan and made it possible for us to have an exchanged life and be conformed again into the image of Christ; that is quite a victory!

If I have a little victory, and I catch a little fish, take my picture, “Hey, here’s my fish. Look what I’ve caught!” We sort of trumpet that; we put our trophies on display. I don’t mean to be irreverent, but Jesus did not toot His own horn. This is an amazing thing! If that were me and I just conquered sin, death, hell, judgment, the anger of God, and I made it possible for all to be saved, and I raised myself from the dead, I wouldn’t have appeared this way. I would have come down on a beam of light from heaven and with a retinue of angels, and they would be all around me. Catch the wonder of this, brothers. Here is Christ in His resurrection body walking and talking; He is alive and He raised Himself from the dead. Instead of saying to those Emmaus disciples, “Here’s My hands; touch Me; here’s my side, put your hand in,” instead of showing up in a stretch limousine because of His great victory, instead of coming with twenty thousand angels, and instead of blasting a trumpet (that’s what I would have done), He’ll do that when you arise but not when He rose, He rose as quietly as the sun rising in the morning.

To make Himself known He takes a book. I would have said, “Ta da! Here I am!” He said, “No, you want to know Me?” then He takes a book and He begins to open it and beginning with Genesis and beginning with all the scriptures He showed them Himself in all the scriptures, so much so that later they said, “Didn’t our hearts burn!” He could have done it another way, but He’s laying out a principle, “I’m not dead, and I’m not gone, but I live again and I live in your life to replace your life. If you’re going to know Me you need to be prepared

for that.” Mary said, “I’ve got to see the Lord.” That’s preparation number one. Thomas said, “I’ve got to see the Lord on the basis of reliable witnesses by faith in this book.” That’s preparation number two. The Emmaus disciples said, “It’s not enough; I now need God’s revelation on this book in order to see the Lord.” He’s laying down great truths on how to know Him.

PREPARATION #4: NEW CREATION IN JESUS

UPPER ROOM DISCIPLES

There are two records of the Upper Room. One is in the gospel of John, and one is in Luke 24. The gospel of John leaves out something or adds something that Luke 24 doesn’t add,

“And He breathed upon them and said, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit.’” (John 20:22)

If I’m reading it right, John’s, “He breathed on them and said, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit,’” is exactly the time Luke says,

“And He opened their minds to understand the scriptures.” (Luke 24:25)

There is something wonderfully connected there, and I have an idea what he was saying. There are only two times in the Bible God breathed on people. Do you remember the first one? It’s when Adam was nothing more than an amorphous blob, when he was clay. He had eyes but he couldn’t see. He had ears but he couldn’t hear. He had a mouth, but he couldn’t talk. He was helpless and he was just a clay image, until God breathed His life into him, and he became alive. What God is saying is, “Now, watch,” this is not the next step but it’s an introduction to the next step. I’ve got to see Jesus—Mary. I’ve got to see Jesus in the book—Thomas. I’ve got to see Jesus in the book by the unveiling, by the Holy Spirit, by His light—the Emmaus disciples.

And I've got to see Him in such a way that there is a new creation, that He makes me alive—the Upper Room.

Christians are every bit as dead as Adam was before God breathed into him, until they learned that exchanged life. “And last of all,” Paul says. We’re going to jump over a lot, but last of all, the final preparation, Lord willing, we’ll begin that tonight. I’m going to do it backwards. I should take the road to Damascus and say, “Here is what happened, and here’s what it means,” but I believe God has led me the other way around. Tonight, we’re going to look at Damascus and here’s what it means out of the mouth of Paul. Paul will explain the experience. We need to see what the exchanged life is. Having said that, Lord willing, tomorrow morning we’ll look at the final preparation—here is what happened, so, let’s look at it because that’s what will always happen. Now you are ready. That’s where we are.

I need to see Jesus, I need to see Jesus in this book, I need to see Jesus in this book by the Holy Spirit’s unveiling of Him, and I need to see Jesus in this book by the Holy Spirit’s unveiling of Him in such a way that God breathes on me and His life becomes my life. May God help us! Let’s pray.

Father, thank You again for Your word, not what we think it might mean but all that You know it means. Please work these things in our heart. If there is any brother here, young or old, who is not fully prepared to have union with the indwelling Christ, will you prepare us, Lord, even this weekend, in order that we might know how to relate to our Lord Jesus who lives in our hearts by the Holy Spirit? Thank You that You will work this for us because You are so good. In Jesus’ name. Amen

3

Final Preparation for the Exchanged Life

(Paul)

WELCOME AND OPENING PRAYER

Good evening, brothers, and I trust you had a good day in union with the Lord. As we come again this evening to look at His precious word, once again there's that Bible principle, that indispensable principle of all Bible study and of life, which is total reliance upon God's Holy Spirit. We sort of prayed that indispensable principle in our last song together. Let me share a Bible verse, and I'd like to pray again and just commit our time to Him. It's from John 14:2&3, remember our Lord Jesus was just before the cross, and He said,

“In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so I would have told you.” (John 14:2&3)

That expression gripped my heart, “If it were not so I would have told you.” “If it were not so,” would have been bad news because the sentence is, “In My Father’s house are many mansions.” If that wasn’t so, basically, I don’t want to hear it; it’s bad news. And He said, “If I’m willing to tell you bad news, ‘If it were not so, I would have told you,’ and I’m so willing to tell you bad news,” then how willing is our Lord Jesus to tell us good news? “If it were not so, I would have told you. If it were so I would have told you.” So, He fills His precious book with good news, and He longs to tell us so. So, let’s just allow Him to do that. Let’s pray...

Father, we thank You so much for Your Bible and the Holy Spirit that lives in our hearts ever to focus our faith, to turn the eyes of our heart onto Him. As we have sung, now we pray, “Lord, we do want to see Jesus; we do want to hear Jesus.” By Your grace we pray that in this season of meditation we might indeed see the Lord and hear the Lord. Save us from men, show us Christ, and we ask this in the matchless name of our Lord Jesus. Amen.

REVIEW

As you know, brothers, we’re looking at the wonders of the exchanged life illustrated by the post-resurrection appearances of our Lord Jesus over a period of forty or so days. It appears to me that our Lord Jesus arranged those post-resurrection appearances to teach us that He’s not dead, and by many infallible proofs He showed that He is not dead. To teach us that He’s not gone, He had that wonderful transition where they could get used to the idea that He was still there even though He’s invisible and even though it’s spiritual rather than physical. They needed to know that He was not gone. I’m suggesting, and that’s what we’re looking at this weekend, that He appeared those many times,

those twelve times, in order to prepare them for that new union, that new relationship, when on Pentecost they would have discovered that He is neither dead nor gone but He's alive, and He's alive in me. They needed to be prepared for that; that was new and different. They had not experienced that, and to relate to an indwelling Christ was so brand new that He had to get them ready for that. In addition to proving that He was alive and proving that He wasn't gone, He used those experiences to lay age-abiding principles that not only prepared them for that day but everyone who ever picks up this book since that day. It prepares us, so that we can have an intimate union with an indwelling Christ who lives in us by His precious Holy Spirit.

Each of those post-resurrection miracles/appearances lays down a principle by showing us that by appearing to Mary Magdalene, He taught us not to cling to Him in the flesh. We discussed that together. She thought she could serve Him without His life. She thought she could explain events apart from His life. She thought she could do in her own strength and power and enablement a ministry apart from His life, but by His life when He appeared to her, she learned at least this, when He said, "Mary," she learned it was about relationship, and she cried out, "Teacher, Rabbi." It's about relationship. When she left the pages of the Bible, remember her final words, "I have seen the Lord." Preparation number one is that if I'm ever going to relate to the Christ that now lives inside, I must see the Lord. God will arrange it in your life and mine; He'll engineer things so you'll finally come to that place, "I've been doing this, I've been running here, I've been involved in this, and all the programs and everything else, but now I want to see the Lord." That's not everything but that's the beginning; that's preparation one.

Then He appeared to our dear brother, Thomas, and we looked at that this morning. Thomas also needed to be corrected. Mary thought she could cling in the flesh. Thomas thought that sight would help faith, and he needed to be corrected of that idea, so we see Thomas who was

given that great privilege, though he didn't enter into it fully, of standing where we stand, to know Jesus as we must know Him, based on reliable witnesses, and his reliable witnesses, his friends, have become our Bible. Now, based on the testimony of Mary and Peter and James and five hundred people and the Emmaus disciples and the Upper Room crowd, we also say, "He's not dead; He's alive." We have witnesses. Mary teaches us that we've got to see the Lord. Thomas introduces us to a new way and we've got to see the Lord in this book.

Then we looked for a moment at the Emmaus disciples, and how the Lord Jesus then took this book and by illumination, by a miracle, by the Holy Spirit, opened the scriptures and explained in all the scriptures things concerning Himself, so that later they testified, "Didn't our hearts burn within us when He spoke to us and showed Himself in all the scriptures!"

Preparation—He's not dead and He's not gone; He's alive, He's alive in you. How are you going to be related to Him? I need to see Him, and I need to see Him in this book, and I need to see Him in this book by the unveiling ministry of the Holy Spirit as He opens my mind to understanding the scripture.

When we closed, we looked for a moment at that Upper Room when our Lord Jesus appeared, and He breathed upon them. Pentecost was coming; He would send the Holy Spirit, but they got a foretaste of that, didn't they? He breathed on them, illustrating that when I see Jesus, when I see Jesus in this book, when I see Jesus in this book by the Holy Spirit, there is a new creation. He breathed on them a new creation. That was all preparation. The Holy Spirit hadn't even come yet, and yet they received the Holy Spirit, and in foretaste they began to understand, and we are only beginning to understand, as He prepares us. Brothers, I'll just announce it again and then we'll move on, He's not dead, and He's not gone; He's very much alive, and He's alive in you, and He is inviting us, dear brothers, to know the Lord through this book by the Holy Spirit, so that there is a new creation.

PAUL – THE FINAL PREPARATION – A NEW CREATION

That brings us then this evening to the final witness. We jumped over a few things, but I want to come to this...

“He appeared to Cephas and then the twelve, and after that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now; some have fallen asleep. Then He appeared to James and then to all the apostles,” (and this is the verse), **“and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me, also, for I’m the least of the apostles and not fit to be called an apostle because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God, I am what I am and His grace toward me did not prove vain. I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me.”** (1 Corinthians 15:5-8)

Verse 8, “And last of all, He appeared to me, also.” We know that the risen Savior appeared to others after He appeared to Paul. For example, He appeared to John on the Isle of Patmos. In fact, He appeared more times to Paul himself. I suggested, this is strange, that he would go back in his mind seven years, list those who saw the Lord literally with these (natural) eyes—Thomas and Peter and Cephas and James and five hundred people; they saw Him. Then he said, “I, too, saw him.” He puts himself in the list as if he were there during those forty days. He wasn’t there; this is seven years later, “Last of all He appeared to me.” I’m suggesting that “last of all” means final preparation; He was preparing us by those visitations, and the last preparation is this. So, we’re going to look at Paul as the final preparation.

That expression, “As one untimely born,” commentators have a hay day with that, and they go in many different directions. The thing that

touched my heart the most was how that word was used; it's the word that means abortion; at least it means very prematurely born and born with a lot of problems, if you are born at all. Probably he looked back at all of his Jewish life and he said, "As I look back now, I was born dead, and that's just an abortion. There's nothing there, and one so unworthy, a persecutor of the church, that He could have mercy on me, an abortion? But He did." I think that's how that verse is used. God had mercy on him, and so that experience on the Damascus Road is God's last preparation, His final preparation, the last thing I need to know, the last thing you need to know. I need to know that I have to go after the Lord. I need to know I have to go after the Lord in this book. I need to know I have to go after the Lord in the book by the Holy Spirit and His life. I need to know that it's going to produce a new creation. But there's one more thing I need to know, and now God tells us the last preparation. I need to know what that new creation is. So, God is now giving us this record.

What happened to the apostle on that one hundred and thirty-six to one hundred and sixty mile trip, depending on the route he took, from Jerusalem to Damascus, and how is that final preparation? Brothers, I think it goes without saying that the conversion of the Apostle Paul is the most famous conversion of all time. I think that goes without saying. The number one enemy of our Lord Jesus somehow became the number one friend of our Lord Jesus. Don't read that la, la, la; that was a tremendous thing! How did the number one enemy of Christ become the number one friend of Christ? Call it what you will, that's amazing; that's going from night to day; that's going from darkness to light; that's going from hell to heaven. There's a tremendous something that took place then.

I read this statement and I sort of incline to it. One of my commentators said, "The conversion of Saul of Tarsus did not make him better; it made him other." It's an interesting way to say it. He was a new creation, and so we've got to look at this conversion. I know that you

already know this, but in order to illustrate what happened here, let me share some verses. This was a wicked man. He had a vicious past. During this time before Damascus, he hated Christ, and he hated everybody who belonged to Christ. He wasn't a fence sitter, he wasn't neutral; he was active, he was aggressive. He wasn't a compromiser; He was a hater of the Lord Jesus. Listen to these verses.

“Now Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked for letters from him in the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, both men and women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.” (Acts 9:1&2)

“I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and putting both men and women into prison, as also the high priest and all the counsel of the elders can testify. From them I also received letters to the brethren, and I started off to Damascus in order to bring those who were there to Jerusalem as prisoners to be punished.” (Acts 22:4&5)

“So then, I thought to myself that I had to do many things hostile to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. And this is just what I did in Jerusalem. Not only did I lock up many of the saints in prison, having received authority from the chief priests, but when they were being put to death, I cast my vote against them, and I punished them often in the synagogues. I tried to force them to blaspheme. I, being furiously enraged at them, I kept pursuing them, even to foreign cities.” (Acts 26:9-11)

Nice fellow. In Philippians 3:6, he calls himself “a persecutor of the church”. In 1 Timothy 1:13 he said,

“I was a blasphemer, a persecutor, a violent aggressor.” (1 Timothy 1:13)

This man was wicked, and I know you know that, but enter into that. He persecuted men, women, and children, and he went into their homes, and he dragged them out and he tied them up, and he carried them away to prison, and he beat them, and he tried to get them to blaspheme against the Lord, and he voted against them, and he had them put to death. He was a wicked, wicked man. Paul’s story, in my understanding, picks up exactly at the Upper Room where the Lord breathed on them, a new creation; he became a new creation, and we’ve got to understand that new creation. We’ve got to understand it if we’re going to relate to the indwelling Christ because that’s what it’s all about, and that is the last preparation.

I think you know that Saul’s dramatic conversion is recorded three times in the Bible. It’s recorded once in Acts 9 by Luke, the human author of the book of Acts. That’s the event. It’s probably around 30 A.D. Then, Acts 22, twenty-five years go by, and he’s now giving his testimony on the steps of the temple in Jerusalem, and he gives his testimony in Hebrew. Two years later, twenty-seven years after the event, Acts 26, about 64 A.D, very close to the time he died, he gives his testimony a third time before King Agrippa. Don’t read that la, la, la. What that means is that there is more inspired space given to Paul’s conversion than any other event in the New Testament, with the exception of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. If God is going to give that much inspired space to this one event, I think He’s saying, “Pay attention to this one event.” This is big, brothers, and it’s big because it’s the final preparation that we need in order to relate to the indwelling Christ. If we miss this, even if we have those other preparations, God is going to have to work in our life until we get this, before we can enjoy that sweet union with Him.

I'm not holding anybody's testimony in suspicion; you are probably already there and I'm just reciting your testimony, but if there is some brother here who has not been fully prepared by the Lord, and you hear all about the indwelling Christ and victory in the Lord and relating to Him and knowing Him, and yet you aren't clear on it, may God use this weekend, brothers, to get us all crystal clear. What is that preparation? How can I know and enjoy this indwelling Christ?

The Apostle Paul, I believe, in this event is the model conversion. In other words, every true conversion must follow this pattern. This is the model conversion. I believe that the Apostle himself is the model convert. What do I mean by the model conversion? What I mean is that all the principles of real conversion have to be present, and they are illustrated here. I am not suggesting that in order to be truly saved you need to see a bright light; that's not the point. I'm not saying that you need to hear a literal voice. That's not the point. I'm not saying that you need to be persecuting Christians. That is not the point. What I'm trying to say is that there are principles here. For example, Paul's conversion, if anybody's conversion was, his conversion was pure grace. Would anybody deny that? It had to be pure grace. If ever a conversion was traced to God alone... When I read the record, he wasn't at a revival meeting. He wasn't at a prayer meeting. He wasn't at a conference like this. He was out hating Jesus. He was out hating the people of God. He was putting to death God's remnant, God's flock, and the Lord met him. That's grace; that is the grace of the Lord. When God stops Saul in his tracks, the one who was fighting Jesus and hating Jesus and hating the people of God, and in a moment he became a new creation, what was that all about? **All true conversions must have the grace of God.**

Then later, another principle, for example, in Galatians 1:15&16 he calls his conversion "a revelation of the Lord". **All true conversions are revelations.** You see, in our day we don't say that. We say a conversion is a decision for Jesus. I'm not ruling out decisions for

Jesus, but that's not conversion. You can make all the decisions in the world, but if there is no revelation of Christ, there's no salvation. **When this proud Pharisee was made humble, those are principles, and that's what I mean when I say that this is a model conversion; it's by the grace of God, and it's by the revelation of Jesus Christ, it is a humbling of a person, it's an awakening.** All of that we see illustrated here, but I don't want to talk about his conversion as the model conversion. I want to talk about Paul as the model convert; that's the point—himself, as it was Mary, as it was Thomas, as it was the disciples, “Last of all He appeared to me.” That's what we want to look at.

You might ask, “What do you mean that he's a model convert? Aren't there many Godly men and women that are models, are examples? Isn't Moses an example of meekness? Isn't Job an example of patience? Isn't Abraham a model of faith? Isn't Solomon a model of wisdom? Isn't Elijah a model of courage? Isn't David a model of devotion? Isn't Peter a model of progressive sanctification? Aren't they all illustrations? And why just stick with the Bible saints? Isn't Augustine a model, and Luther and Calvin and Whitfield and Wesley and me and all the saints you can name? And why do they have to be dead? How about the saints that are alive today, people you know? Aren't they good examples of Christian living? The answer is, “Yes, they are models, but they are all incomplete models. **There is only one complete model, and that's the Apostle Paul.**” He's God's illustration; that's not my idea; that's not Paul's idea; that's God's idea. God said, “I'm going to give you one illustration, and I'm going to take this brother through every Christian experience,” and that's why Paul said, “I spoke with tongues more than anybody; I've been through everything. I know all about all the gifts; I know about everything,” because God took that one man through.

Let me share a few of these verses.

“He’s a chosen instrument of mine, to bear My name among the gentiles, the kings and the sons of Israel; I will show him how much he must suffer for my namesake.” (Acts 9:15&16)

“I exhort you, therefore, be imitators of me.” (1 Corinthians 4:16)

“The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice those things.” (Philippians 4:9)

“Be imitators of me, just as I am of Christ.” (1 Corinthians 11:1)

“For this reason I found mercy, in order that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience as an example for all who would believe on Him for eternal life.” (1 Timothy 1:16&17)

He was selected on purpose. We say, “Well, can I apply that, ‘Be followers of me, as I am of Christ?’” Sure, you can, but not like he did. He meant it literally. I read the verse, and he said, “I’m the chief of sinners,” and I say, “Ah, he missed it; I’m the chief of sinners.” No, Paul was the chief of sinners; he was on purpose. He was the most self-righteous and he was the chief. If God did something like this for the chief, He did it for every one of us.

When this man first came to the Lord, very early he was told that he was selected to be the model of the Christian experience, the New Covenant life. All through his ministry he referred back to it. Why is it important that this man with this dramatic conversion be chosen as

the model? The answer is because this is final preparation; this is the last step. This is the full explanation of, “The Lord breathed on them and said, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit.’” He is God’s example of the exchanged life. Mary saw Christ. Thomas saw the Lord. Those on the road to Emmaus saw the Lord; they saw Him in the Bible by the Holy Spirit, and they became a new creation. Now, Paul says, “I’m the last one in that list. I’m the last one. It’s final, and when I saw the Lord, I became a new creation.” He is the illustration of that new creation. God breathed on him, a new creation, and now we have the illustration. The Apostle Paul *is* the new creation. How did it happen? He said twenty-seven years later, “Do you want to know, Felix, how it happened? One day I saw Jesus.” So, we need to talk about that, and may God help us as we look for this explanation.

What I’d like to do is, in one sense it’s a little backwards, we need to understand Paul’s experience and Paul has explained his experience, I want to do what I did with Mary Magdalene and what I did with Thomas; I want to show you the experience. What I was planning originally was to go through the record and show you, “Here’s what happened, and here’s what it means,” but I felt inclined to go the other way. What I’d like to do tonight is say, “Here’s what it means,” and then tomorrow, Lord willing, we’ll look at it, and we’ll have an illustration of the experience. It’s sort of like the dinosaur bones; we can’t deny the bones, but we can deny the interpretation of the bones. We can’t deny what happened to the Apostle Paul, but there are some strange explanations. I don’t know anything more fair than letting Paul explain his own experience, and he does it under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, so we have that record. Lord willing, tomorrow we’ll look at the record of it.

Let me just say this, if you’ll pray for me during this lesson, I’d appreciate it, because in a sense by showing Paul’s explanation of what happened, and I don’t like this but I don’t know where to go, maybe it will come across as doctrine, as teaching, and just sort of academic and

polemic and oratory; I don't want that. I want life, and as our brother just prayed before we came up here, that God would turn it into life, I'm going to believe God for that prayer. I know you didn't come here on purpose to hear me give a catechism. You don't want that, and I don't want that. Also, added to that is that I know you've heard all this before. I'm not going to tell you anything new. I hope it's alive. Let me just sort of state it for you, and then illustrate it in the word, and then, Lord willing, tomorrow we'll look at it.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A CHANGED LIFE AND AN EXCHANGED LIFE

I've already stated it but I'm going to state it again now as a principle, there is a difference, a tremendous difference between a changed life and an exchanged life. This is the last preparation, and what God is saying is, "You better know that difference, because if you don't know that difference, you'll be running down the wrong path, and you'll be frustrated to death and you'll never enter into that sweet union with the indwelling Christ. You've got to know the difference between change and exchange."

In one sense we look at the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, and we say, "What a change in Saul! The number one enemy of Christ has become the number one friend of Christ." In one sense that's true, but in another sense the Damascus Road didn't change Saul at all; there was no change in Saul. The Damascus Road killed Saul. If you want to call that a change, go ahead. That's what happened; Saul died, and another rose in his place. That's not a change; that's an exchange. The number one enemy of Christ died, and the number one friend of Christ was raised again.

I know what causes the confusion is that for years we've read about the change and being transformed and being conformed to the image of

Christ. We've read about growth, and we've read about maturity, and we've read about bearing fruit, and we hear about a new creation, and we know all things pass away, and we know that everything becomes new, and that sounds like a change. When we worship, we sing change songs. We sing, "Change me, oh God, change my heart, oh God," "What a wonderful change in my life has been wrung since Jesus came into my heart." Then we hear testimonies, "I'm not what I will be, I'm not what I should be, but praise God I'm not what I was. I've been changed." We see it on the Tee-shirts, "Work in Progress", "God is Not Finished With Me Yet," "The Unfinished Work," "I'm Being Molded," "I'm Being Conformed," "I'm Being Transformed," "I'm Being Changed." Those expressions and those sentiments have brought some confusion among the people of God, and even some seasoned saints have not understood this final preparation. There's a difference between a changed life and an exchanged life. Those who have not had God's light on that difference are ill-prepared for union with the indwelling Christ. So, may God help us as we look at this. This is the final preparation.

As you know, God used the Apostle Paul to write at least thirteen epistles in the New Testament. I say "at least" because we don't know about Hebrews. If God used him for that we don't know, but in the thirteen epistles, he continually wrote about the great mystery of union with Christ over and over again. In the epistles, the church epistles, we have what we call the full mention of the truth of union with Christ. Seventy-eight times he repeats that precious little expression "in Christ Jesus", "in Christ Jesus", over and over and over. I'm only going to quote a few verses. There are others I could quote but these are the famous ones. You'll know these and you'll be able to recite them as I read them.

"For through the Law I died to the Law, that I might live to God. I've been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and

the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me.” (Galatians 2:19&20)

“It is no longer I who live but Christ lives in me,” that’s not a change; that’s an exchange. Do you see what I’m saying?

“For me to live is Christ, and to die is to gain,” (more of Christ, basically). (Philippians 1:21)

“Indeed, we have the sentence of death within ourselves, so that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead.” (1 Corinthians 1:9)

“Even so, consider yourselves to be dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.” (Romans 6:1)

“For you have died and your life is hid with Christ in God.” (Colossians 3:3)

That’s not a change; that’s an exchange; you’re dead and your life is hid. There are many other passages. The one that’s my favorite, one of my favorites, because it stresses, and it’s a transition to the union, to the relationship, and he uses marriage, is...

“Therefore, my brethren, you were also made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, in order that you might bear fruit unto God.” (Romans 7:4)

That’s not a change; that’s an exchange. Saul is dead, and the person who now lives in him, he says, is no longer him but somebody else.

If you struggled, as I did in my earlier Christian life, reading all of these victorious life books and reading all the mystics and people so close to the Lord, your heart is panting and is saying, “How come it doesn’t work for me?” If you’ve read some of those books, you’ll probably be

familiar with some of these expressions because everybody has their own little name for it. We're talking about union with Christ, but they all have their own special name, and they write books and I'm looking at all of these names, and I'm thinking, "That's different, that's different and I've got to read that," so I went through all of this. Some of the old mystics call it the "union life" or the "Christ life". Some that were a little further out on the branch called it "the over-soul" or "break-through", or "the sacramental life", or "life in the Holy of Holies". I'm over there going, "Yeah, that's what I want."

Dr. A. J. Gordan wrote a book called "The Two-Fold Life". Major Ian Thomas wrote a little book, and he called it "The Saving Life of Christ". Miles Stanford calls it "the life of identification". Watchman Nee calls it "The Normal Christian Life", and it's just a normal life. The early Keswick writers, Boardman, Smith, Evans, and some of the others called it "the higher life", and so they had many books on the higher life. Ruth Paxton wrote a little book called "Life on the Highest Plane", and it's a higher life. Dr. Maxwell, who is the former president of Prairie Bible Institute, wrote a book called "Born Crucified", and it's the crucified life. On and on it goes. The later Keswick writers called it "the victorious life" or "the Christ-centered life" or "the life of consecration" or "the life of full consecration". It's been called "the overcoming life", "the Spirit-filled life," "the abundant life", "the life triumphant", "the deeper life", "the second blessing", "sanctification", and "the baptism of the Holy Spirit".

I don't care what you call it. Everybody is talking about the same thing. How can I know Jesus? How can I relate to Him? How can I have an intimacy with Him? How can we be one? How can I have communion with the Lord? That's what it's all about. All those books, though there are different nuances, come at it slightly differently. And then there's a big war, and everybody is fighting everybody else's book, "They're off-centered, and they're off-centered," and you get into all of that. I went through a lot of that.

But there's a title, and even though it's from man, that has communicated to my heart more clearly than any other, and that's why I'm using it here. It's the "exchanged life", and that's what I'm calling it. That title I got from Hudson Taylor. It was made famous by him. I haven't seen anybody in any of the earlier writers use the same expression, but nothing is new under the sun. He got it from somebody, probably McCarthy, because he said that he was the human instrument that led him to see the Lord. I don't know where he got it, but he used that title in a letter that he wrote to his sister, Amelia. He had been a missionary in bondage, a Christian who loved the Lord, served the Lord and gave his life to serve the Lord, but knew nothing of this intimate union with the Lord until God dawned it on his heart. He wrote this letter in October 1869. You probably know it as "Hudson Taylor's Spiritual Secret", the biography that was written by his second son, Dr. Howard Taylor. Anyway, I jotted down a portion of the letter:

"Oh, my dear sister, it's a wonderful thing to be really one with a risen and exalted Savior, to be a member of Christ. Just think of what it involves. Can Christ be rich, and I be poor? Can your right-hand be rich, and the left-hand poor? Can your head be full, and the body starved? Dear sister, I saw not only that Jesus would never leave me, that I was a member of His body, of His flesh, of His bones, but the vine I now see is not the root merely, but all; it's the root, it's the stem, the branches, the twigs, the leaves, the flowers, the fruit. And Jesus is not only that, He's the soil and the sunshine, He's the air and the showers, and ten thousand times more than I have ever dreamed, that I've ever wished, and that I've ever needed. Oh, the joy of this wonderful truth!"

He goes on; I've left a lot out...

"The sweetest part, if one may speak of one part being sweeter than another, is the rest which this identification with Christ brings. Dear sister, I am no longer anxious about anything.

As I realize this, for I know He is able to carry out His will, and His will is now my will, it makes no matter where He places me or how. All His resources are mine, and He is mine and is with me and dwells in me, and all this springs from the believer's oneness with Christ. Since Christ has come to dwell in my heart by faith, how happy I have been! I wish I could come tell you about it instead of writing it."

Then he adds this...

"I am no better off now. May I say, in a sense, I do not wish to be any better off, nor am I striving to be, but I have learned that I am dead and buried with Christ and risen, too, and ascended, and now Christ lives in me, and the life that I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me. Now I believe I am dead to sin; God reckons me so, and He tells me to reckon myself so."

That emphasis he called "the exchanged life". The problem with a title is that everybody abuses it, and so I did what many do these days, and I googled the "exchanged life". My virgin eyes! I couldn't believe some of the stuff that came up of the hundreds of thousands of hits on "the exchanged life". There's an exchanged life movement going on. I don't want to identify with them. There's an exchanged life ministry. There's an exchanged life counseling service. They don't all mean what Hudson Taylor meant when they say "the exchanged life". One group has a thing called "exchanged life" to illustrate that the old nature has been completely eradicated: that's the exchanged life. Another is, "The exchanged life means you are no longer trichotomist—body, soul and spirit—but now there is only one nature, the exchanged life." Another says, "The exchanged life is the early step in man becoming God." "The exchanged life," they're using my word; they're killing my whole thing. I love this exchanged life, that expression as Hudson Taylor used it, but enough of Hudson Taylor.

What Paul meant by “the flesh”

Let's listen again to Paul. How did Paul explain his own experience? Let me set it before you this way. There's one word, and usually those who are striving as I was striving to know Jesus in sweet union, they usually get hung up on this word, and since Paul used it two different ways, let me just set that before you. I'm talking about the word “flesh”. Twenty-eight times in Romans alone he uses the word “flesh”.

There are two ways he used it and pretty much we use it the same way. First of all, sometimes he just means this present life, flesh, “I'm alive.” John 1:14, “The word became flesh.” That's not sinful flesh; the word became humanity. It's just a Person; He became a man. 1 Timothy 3:16 says, “Christ was manifest in the flesh.” That just means that He was a man. 1 Peter 4:1, “Christ suffered in the flesh.” There's nothing sinful about flesh, as he is using it there. I'm sure that when in Philippians 1:24 Paul said, “Now, it's needful for you that I abide in the flesh,” I don't think he was saying, “It's needful for you to have a sinner here with you, that I abide in the flesh.” He wasn't saying that. He was just talking about being alive. When he wrote in Colossians 2:1, “Many of you haven't seen me in the flesh,” he's not saying, “You didn't see me sin.” He's just saying that you've never seen me. In the flesh, that's what Job meant when he said, “In my flesh I'll see God.” That's what David meant when he said, “All flesh shall bless His holy name.” It's just people; it's just being alive. It's what Isaiah meant when he said, “All flesh is grass.” It's just this idea that we are alive.

But, brothers, there is another use, and that's what we want to look at. When our Lord Jesus told Peter in...

“The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak.” What's that flesh? (**Matthew 26:41**)

“Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and its desires.” That’s what we’re looking at. (Galatians 5:24)

“I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. The willing is present with me but the doing of the good is not.” (Romans 7:18)

“We are the true circumcision who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus, and put no confidence in the flesh.” (Philippians 3:3)

It’s that use of the word “flesh”. What does Paul mean by that, because he’s the one we’re looking at; it’s him that’s been converted and he’s the new creation.

Here is what I thought for years. It’s wrong, but I thought it for years. Here is what many Christians think, and though I am rather cloistered in my little Rhode Island study, I don’t have a wide view of the body of Christ, like Dana and some of these other brothers have, but in the little view I’ve had among Christians, from my little narrow experience, most Christians think this. Here is what they think the flesh is. They think that the flesh is a proclivity to sin, that there is something in me, that God wants me to go that way and this thing wants me to go this way. It’s a tendency, it’s a bend, it’s an inclination to do the wrong thing; it’s a drive built into my nature not to do God’s will but to go and do my own will. To prove it they take one of the most misunderstood chapters in the Bible, Romans 7, in my opinion that’s one of the most misunderstood chapters, to prove their point. They say that I’ve got this inclination to do wrong.

In other words, here is their idea of victory; “I am naturally selfish and I’m choosing my own thing; God, change me! I don’t want to be selfish anymore. I want to be generous. Will you do a work in me and change me so that I’m not that inclination, but I’m the other thing? I’ve got this pride in me, and I’m always thinking about myself. I hate it. Lord,

change me so that I won't be proud. Make me humble instead of proud." That's the idea that they have. "I've got this inclination and I hate it. I feed on filth, and I don't want to feed on filth, and I don't want my mind to be full of that fleshly gutter stuff. Turn me around, Lord, and change me. I need to be changed because I have that drive. I'm unloving and I want to be loving. I'm unforgiving. I can't hold my temper. I can't stop fretting. I can't stop worrying. I can't stop hating. I can't stop holding a grudge. I can't stop lying. I can't stop exaggerating. I can't stop gossiping. I can't stop swearing. I can't stop boasting. That's my flesh. I've got this inclination and I've got this drive. Lord, please change me. I'm impatient, I'm stubborn, I'm opinionated, I'm insensitive, I'm intolerant, I'm lazy and I'm no good. Lord, change me." Many people think that is what the flesh is. So, victory is when God comes down and takes that inclination and, by a mighty miracle of God, does something in you, and turns it around so you are no longer inclined that way, "Now I want to do the will of God and I want to honor Him and I want to please Him."

If that's how you think, you are not finally prepared to have union with the risen Christ. That is not the message of the Christian life. It is not a change; it is an exchange. May God help us as we look at this now! He's not talking about some change in some mood or direction in my heart. I don't have an inclination that needs to be changed. It's me, not an inclination in me; it's me that needs to be dealt with. I've only mentioned some of the negative sides of the flesh. The flesh also has a very refined side, and that is still flesh. So, we're all flesh, but it's me. Jesus told Nicodemus,

"That which is flesh is flesh." (John 3:6)

It will always be flesh. It will never be anything but flesh. Jesus didn't come to improve it. "That which is flesh is flesh," and it will always be flesh, and it's not bad news for me to tell my fallen brother, "God will never change you." "That sounds like bad news. Why are you telling him that? He needs to hear that there is hope and God will

change you.” No, he needs to hear the truth; he needs to hear that there is no change for that, but there’s an exchange, a glorious exchange, a life not his, a life that is God’s. We need to understand what happened to the Apostle Paul, not just one or two tendencies. I was born flesh and I’m going to stay flesh, and God hasn’t promised to change my flesh. He’s promised to do something much bigger than that.

Now, brothers, I don’t know a lot of you, and I’m not looking into your heart. I’ve looked into my own heart, and I know the brothers and the sisters that have come into my life that I’m dealing with, and some of them, I’m telling you, it breaks my heart. They are frustrated to pieces because God is not coming through. They’ve cried out to the Lord, and they’ve been entangled and been in bondage to these things—lust, passion, pride, selfishness, materialism, addicted to many dependencies—to smoking and to drugs and to alcohol and to pornography and to work and to boredom, and all of these things. They are enslaved to these things, and they are crying out in reality. They love Jesus and have said, “Please, change me; I’m losing my life and I’m losing my testimony. Change me. I can’t change; I can’t stop. I need to be helped.” They are crying in vain because He has never promised to change us. Now, He’ll deal with you where you are, of course, and He’ll minister to you, but He’s going to bring you to this message.

The exchanged life is a mystery

Some of the people I have the privilege to share our Lord Jesus with come to me and tell me that they read all the how-to books, and they have been on all the websites, and they’ve listened to all the tapes, and they’ve gone to all the counselors, and they’ve been mentored, and they go from church to church, and they go from conference to conference, because they’re sick of the flesh; they’re sick of it. People talk about victory and people talk about knowing the Lord, and they’re saying, “Why doesn’t it work? Why doesn’t it work for me? How come everybody else talks about this sweet union and victory of this, and I

can't stop sinning?" They want to know. So, God gives us the Apostle Paul, and he said, "Last of all, He appeared to me, and in that day I died, and there was an exchange, a new life, a thrilling truth." I like the way Major Ian Thomas said it in his book, "The Saving Life", "It takes God to be a man. It takes God to be a woman. It takes God to be the husband that you ought to be. It takes God to be the father that you ought to be. It takes God to be the brother you ought to be. It takes God to be the elder that you ought to be. You need a life not your own."

As I stand before you, I can testify that I've never been a drunkard. That's a fact. I've never been addicted to drugs, and I've never been a murderer. I've been a hypocrite. As far as I know, except maybe in my heart or in my mind, I've never been a pervert, and I've never laid a glove on Lillian. I've never been an idolator except in the sense of 1 John. I have a greater testimony than that. I can't say that God delivered me from a drunkard's grave. I can stand before you today and say that God delivered me from me. That's a better testimony. He delivered me from me, and He can deliver you from you. Now, every potential of every sin is in me and it's in your heart and it's in all of us, but that's what happened that day on the Damascus Road. One day, like Mary, he saw Jesus. One day, like Thomas, he saw Jesus. One day, like the disciples on the road to Emmaus he saw Jesus. One day, like those in the Upper Room he saw Jesus, and when he saw Jesus, he died and there was a new life.

Let me try to explain it one other way, and then I'll close trying to explain it. Tomorrow we'll look at the record. Let me explain it by the life of Jesus in His two bodies. When He was on the earth the first time He had a body. It was an incarnate body.

"The word became flesh." (1 John 1:14)

"In the fullness of time God sent forth His Son born of a woman." (Galatians 4:4)

He lived on the earth for thirty-three and a half years and He walked around in a body. They could say, "Look, there He goes. That's His body; that's Jesus. I know where He lives, and I know His family. That's His body." Whole books have been written trying to understand Jesus in His body.

"He emptied Himself." (Philippians 2:7)

You should see the books written on "he emptied Himself", and what's involved in all of that. The theologians, because they can't explain it, they just sort of give you a fifty cent word and they give it a name, "Let's study the theanthropic person; let's study the God-man, and this is incarnation." Then they say, "Alright, now let's look at another mystery. Hmmm, one person, He's God, He's man, two natures; let's discuss that." So, you read the record, and our dear Lord Jesus says, "Show me where you've laid Him," as if He didn't know. He's man, and then all of a sudden He stands up and says, "Lazarus, come forth." "Whoa, He's God." He's in a ship and He's sound asleep. He's man. He stands on the deck and He holds up His hand and He says, "Peace, be still." He's God. They push Him all the way to the edge of a cliff because He's man; He walks right through their midst because He's God. They say, "When are You coming back?" He said, "I don't know; it's not My business. My Father knows and I don't know." A little while later He says, "The Son of Man is going to come in the clouds of heaven with all the angels..." So, the theologians studying Jesus in His incarnate body don't know what to do with that, so they give it a name, "That's the hypostatic union." Did that help? Now you've got a name; it's the hypostatic union.

Then you look at His life again and they scratch their heads, and they say, "I don't understand these wills of His. It looks like He has two wills." I know according to the theologians that this mystery of God and man is uncompounded and unconfounded, and they begin to explain it. I don't want to be irreverent but it looks like if He had His way, do you remember in Gethsemane, "Not My will but Thine be

done,” it looks like there are two wills; the Father has one and He has one, and if He had His way He wouldn’t do it that way, but He surrenders His will. Ah, but the theologians straighten us out here, “The divine will acts, and His human will submits and co-acts.” Here is how one of the theologians attempts to explain it, “It is infinite inclination and volition which makes it voluntary but it must never be incompatible with single self-consciousness.” Alright, that straightens it out. Do you see what I’m trying to say, brothers? I’m trying to say that when Jesus was here in His first body there was tremendous mystery and all they could do is say, “Well, that’s incarnation and that is the hypostatic union and this is the mystery of the logos.” They give you those words and they say, “Go live with that.”

Brothers, He has returned. He’s neither dead nor gone; He’s alive, except that He has a new body, now. What’s His new body? It’s you and it’s me; it’s us. We are His body and now it’s the same Jesus living again but it’s in His new body. Christians are scratching their heads like the theologians and saying, “Well, how does this Christian life work? I don’t get it. It’s called the abiding life and the abundant life and the higher life and the deeper life and the lower life; how do I get hold of it?” “It’s incarnation, God in flesh.” “I don’t get it; I’m alive, I’m not alive, I’m dead, I live but not I but Christ lives in me. It’s Him doing it but it’s me doing it, and I don’t get it.” “Hypostatic union. Alright, that’s what it is. It’s the same thing.” “Do I choose? Does He choose? Do I have to wait until I get into the mood? What if I’m not in the mood to read the Bible? Should I wait until He puts a hunger in there and a thirst in there? Am I supposed to desire? Well, what if I don’t have the desire? How does my will work with His will?”

It’s the mystery of the logos. It’s exactly the same thing. Christ in His mystical body is the same mystery as Christ in His incarnate body, and I’m all done, brothers, trying to explain it. I don’t think anybody else can, at least they haven’t to my satisfaction. I can’t explain it. I can declare it. So, let me declare it. God lives in you. One hundred percent

of the Trinity lives in you. He does! I can't explain it. And you're dead, but you're not dead; you're alive. It's Him, but it's you, but it's Him. It's hypostatic union. I can't explain it. I just know it's true. He lives in me and you can't will until you are drawn, but you've got to will and work out your own salvation. I can't put it together. I just know it's true. You can call it whatever you want to call it; God lives in you. It is not you; it is Him. You are alive, but you are dead. Take it by cold blooded faith.

Let me end with this. Since it's Him in you, it's still you, and to all those who look, it looks like a change. You still think, but now according to the record,

“You have the mind of Christ.” (1 Corinthians 2:16)

You are still logical, and you still weigh the pros and the cons, and you still try to be prudent, and you do what you think is right, and you are committed to the Lord, and you commit your ways to Him, and He's thinking through you. Take it by faith. I still have my hands, and I still have my feet, and I still have my members, and as I once presented them as instruments of unrighteousness, now I present them to Him, just as Peter at the gate called Beautiful said, “Look at us,” and then later in the same chapter, he says to the people, “Why are you looking at us, as if we in our own strength did something? Don't look at us.” “How about because you told us to!” “Look at us,” but he was saying to look at Christ in us. The Bible says that he reached out his hand and he said, “In the name of Jesus get up and walk,” and then later they went to prayer, same chapter, and they said, “Lord, keep stretching forth Your hand to heal.” Well, whose hand was it? Was it His hand or Peter's hand? The answer is, “Yes.” You still have your emotions, but Romans says...

**“The love of God is poured out into your life.”
(Romans 5:5)**

Well, you know what the love of God looks like—joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, and self-control. Self, in the list of the fruit of the Spirit? Self? Indeed, because it's Him! But it's not Him; it's you. And they look at you, and your neighbor looks at you, and your brother looks at you, your sister looks at you and says, "He's not jealous anymore." See, love is not jealous. It's Him! It looks like a change, but you haven't been changed, and you know it. "He's not jealous, and He's not bragging anymore, and He's not seeking his own interest anymore, and He's not easily provoked; He's forgiving everybody, and He's not taking into account a wrong suffered. He's bearing all things and enduring all things and believing all things. Everybody that looks at you says, "Wow, you have changed!" You didn't change at all. Christ is being manifested through you. It's a different life; it's a new life; it's His life. It looks like a change on the outside, but the reality is that it isn't a change.

Let me give this closing illustration and then I'll wrap it up. Everybody who knows me knows that one of my gifts is not mechanics. Out of my many non-gifts, that's one of my non-gifts. I get so frustrated because next to not knowing where I am, I don't know how to do anything. My neighbor knows all about it. Picture my neighbor looking out his window across the street, and he sees me there with my hood open, and here I am and I'm working on my car. All he can do is see me, and thankfully the window is closed so he can't hear me, and he sees me kick the tire, and then he sees me take the screwdriver and say something to it, and then I slap the top of my car. "Ed, oh man, he needs to be changed." But then let's say that I have a friend who is a mechanic, and he comes and he opens the car hood and I'm standing there and now I'm happy. He's looking in my car and he knows what to do, and he gets the right tools, and he takes my crowbar and throws it aside; he doesn't need that anymore. He gets his tools and he begins to work in the car, and my neighbor says to his wife, "Hey, honey, come take a look at this. What a change in Ed Miller. He's not kicking the tire anymore, and he's not saying bad things to the screwdriver, and

he's not hitting the car." Have I changed? No, I haven't changed. If my friend goes away, I'm going to kick the tire again. But at that moment I'm happy and I'm peaceful. It looks like a change. Here is the mystery. Looking out the window, if this friend was not standing in front of the hood, and if he was living inside of me, and it's me and the car doing this, my neighbors might say, "He's not kicking the tire anymore. I wonder what happened to Ed?" No change. It's an exchange.

Brothers, we need to see the Lord. Mary teaches us that. We need to see the Lord in this book. Thomas told us that. We need to see the Lord by the Holy Spirit's life. The Road to Emmaus taught us that. We need to have Jesus breathe on us so that there will be a new creation. The Upper Room taught us that. And we need to reckon ourselves dead and alive to God in Christ Jesus; **it's His life and not ours.**

Tomorrow we're going to actually look at the event. This was an explanation of the event, but we're going to look at the event and watch him see Jesus, and because he saw Jesus, what else did He see? That's where we're going. Let's pray...

Father, thank You for Your word. Burn it in us, we pray. Thank You that even though we don't use those big words, thank You for the incarnation, and thank You for the hypostatic union, and thank You for the mystery of the logos, and thank You for living in us in our place as our substitute. Lord, we take it by faith that You want to live for us as much as You wanted to die for us. Forgive us, Lord, for asking You to do what You have never come to do. Teach us to appropriate Your life. We ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

4

Paul's Exchanged Life

(What Paul Saw)

WELCOME AND PRAYER

It's good to remember the Lord and all that flows from that wonderful sacrifice that He gave. That one brother in prayer quoted that verse from Psalm 51, "Create in me a clean heart, oh God." In the Hebrew I'm told that there are several words for "create", and one of them is "create out of nothing", and that's the word that's used there, "Create out of nothing in me a clean heart, oh God." So He does, and we're so glad to be standing in Him and His righteousness, and to be able to receive His life.

As we come again to the word of God, there's a principle of Bible study that I ever remind myself of and I delight to remind you, as well. It's an indispensable principle, a principle for which there is no substitute,

and that is total reliance upon God's Holy Spirit. God has given us the Bible, and only God can show us the Lord in the Bible, as He did for those dear saints on the road to Emmaus, and opened their minds to understand and opened the scriptures and showed Himself in all the scriptures. This is His delight, and He wants to do it. So, we need to trust Him to do that.

Let me give you a couple of verses, and then we'll look in the word together. One is from Psalm 24:7, and it's also repeated later on in the Psalm. The verse is, "Lift up your heads, oh ye gates, and be lifted up you everlasting doors, and the King of Glory shall come in." That's repeated again later on in the Psalm. Many commentators just refer to that as the ascension psalm and they picture when our Lord Jesus ascended to heaven, "Open the gates, the Lord strong and mighty is coming in, and the Lord of Hosts, the Lord of the armies of heaven and earth is coming in." But the thing that gripped my heart is that little word, "Lift up your heads, oh ye gates, be lifted up oh ancient doors, and the King of Glory shall come in." If He is the King of Glory, He doesn't need your permission to lift up your head and open the gate; He can knock the door down, but He doesn't. Listen to this verse, now, from Song of Solomon, "I was asleep," chapter 5:2, "but my heart was awake. A voice! My Beloved was knocking." When we think about a voice, we think about a word; that's a word, a voice. That's a word. Every time you have the word, your Beloved is knocking, "A voice! My Beloved is knocking. Open to me, my sister, my darling, my dove, my perfect one." And so, the Lord invites us, again, as we come before the ministry of His Holy Spirit in the word, He invites us again to lift up our heads and open wide the gates, and the King of Glory shall come in. A voice! My Beloved is knocking. Such a gentleman is the Lord that He seeks an invitation for His entrance. So, let's give Him that invitation and then we'll look in the word.

Our heavenly Father, thank You so much for Your word. Lord, work in our hearts an openness; we want to open the gates and invite You. We

hear Your voice; come in King of Glory, come in Bridegroom-lover of our soul. Show Yourself today, we pray, and we thank You in advance that You're going to do it. In Jesus' name. Amen.

REVIEW

Well, we've come to our final look at what we're calling the final preparation. Our Lord Jesus appeared over and over again during that forty plus days between His resurrection and His ascension, and He appeared for many, many reasons, but at least to show that He was not dead, and at least to show that He was not gone, and to prepare them for that discovery that would be theirs on the fiftieth day at Pentecost when He sent His dear Holy Spirit, the Comforter, the other advocate, to come into the heart, to show them and prepare them for the discovery that He is neither dead nor gone, but He's very much alive; He's alive in me. They needed to be prepared for that; that was so other, so different, so unusual, and they had never considered that the One that was before them would come and live inside of them, and that they would have to relate now in a new way. They needed to be prepared for that. So, we've been looking together at that wonderful preparation illustrated by His post-resurrection appearances.

By His appearance to Mary He prepared them by teaching us not to cling to Him in the flesh, and now we're going to have a new relationship in the spirit, and it's all about relationship, and it's all about Him calling your name, and you departing with the only testimony that you'll ever have worth anything, "I've seen the Lord." If God could allow us the grace to leave this place this weekend and go back, "What happened? What did you talk about? Describe the experience." If you could honestly say, "I've seen the Lord," there's your testimony.

And then by His appearance to Thomas, He prepared us that it's not by sight, "Blessed are those who believe without seeing," that sight does not help faith. God had called Thomas to stand in the place where we

stand, on the testimony of reliable witnesses which have become our Bible, where we can just believe. I don't know what kind of week Thomas had in between the testimony of the first brothers that he missed, and then finally seeing Him; I don't think he was too happy. "Blessed, happy are those who can trust the Lord and believe on the basis of this word." I need to see Him—Mary Magdalene; I need to see Him in this book—Thomas; He appeared to the brothers on the Emmaus Road to say that it's not enough to open the book, that you need Me to open your heart and open the scriptures and open your mind and open your understanding, and it's by revelation. He's laying out a pattern. How can I relate to the One who is neither dead nor gone, but He's alive and He's alive in me? I need to see Him; I need to see Him in this book; I need to see Him in this book by the revelation of the Holy Spirit.

Then, in the Upper Room He breathed on them, and He announced a new creation. I need to see Him, I need to see Him in this book, I need to see Him in this book by the revelation/illumination of the Holy Spirit, and I need to see Him in such a way that He breathes on me and there's a new creation. That brings us, then, to the final preparation. He also appeared last of all to the Apostle Paul—final preparation. On that road to Damascus we have the model conversion and the model convert, more space given to that one event than anything else in the New Testament apart from the death, burial and resurrection of our Lord Jesus. The Apostle Paul takes great pains to inform us what took place on that day when he saw the Lord.

Last night we looked at Paul's explanation. Let me just read these verses, and then we'll move on:

"I've been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who lives, but Christ lives in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me." (Galatians 2:20)

In those words, “It is no longer I but Christ,” he was declaring what took place that day was not a change but an exchange. It’s not me anymore; it’s Him.

“Even so, consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.” (Romans 6:1)

“You have died, and your life is hid with Christ in God.” (Colossians 3:3)

PAUL’S SPIRITUAL EYES WERE OPENED

Last night we looked at the explanation, and what I want to look at this morning, God assisting, is the actual event, and what are we explaining. Let’s do the story. Just for interest, show of hands, “How many here have never heard any message about the road to Damascus?” Okay, so I understand that. I’m not trying to give you anything new. Everything I’m about to share I know you’ve heard it, and you probably heard many, many, many, many messages on this wonderful event. We’re going to look at it again, not to be novel, not to give you anything new, but to state again the great realities that we all know, we all believe and we all need to be quickened unto.

“Last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me, as well.” (1 Corinthians 15:8)

Last of all, he puts himself in the same list. It would be impossible to exaggerate what took place in the heart of this man when he met the Lord on the road to Damascus. We have a very clumsy way of dividing time by the clock. We divide it into minutes and by hours and days and weeks and months and years, as if every moment were of an equal size. Every moment is not of an equal size. Some hours are very long; it’s still sixty minutes but it’s long. If you get a brother or sister who is tossing on a bed of pain and affliction, an hour is a very long time. Somebody waiting for news, waiting to hear, waiting to have a contact

from a loved one, that can be a long, long wait in a short, short time. Some hours are short. This weekend has been very short for me. Where is it? It's gone. Some hours are very long. Then I look back over the big picture and say, "I've been saved fifty-two years. Where did it go? It's gone." So, we need to realize that what happens in a moment, that's the real measure of time. I have no doubt that this moment that Paul had on the Damascus Road was larger than his whole life. What took place in that moment was a tremendous thing. He was never the same again. He saw Jesus and in that moment, in that revelation, that was big, that was huge, that was grand, that was an amazing moment, and his life was understood and explained in terms of that single moment, and we need to look at that moment.

Let me start by reading the text...

"As he was travelling, it happened that he was approaching Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him, and he fell to the ground, and he heard a voice saying, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?' And he said, 'Who are You, Lord?' And He said, 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting, but get up and enter the city and it will be told you what you must do.' The men who travelled with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one. Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open he could see nothing. Leading him by the hand, they brought him to Damascus. He was three days without sight. He neither ate nor drank. Now, there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias, and the Lord said to him in a vision, 'Ananias,' and he said, 'Here I am, Lord,' and the Lord said to him, 'Get up and go to the street called Straight and inquire at the house of Judas for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying.

And he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay hands on him, so that he might again regain his sight.’ Ananias answered, ‘Lord, I’ve heard much about this man and how much harm he did to your saints at Jerusalem, and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name.’ But the Lord said to him, ‘Go, for he is a chosen vessel, a chosen instrument of Mine to bear My name before the gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel. I must show him how much he must suffer for My name sake.’ And so, Ananias departed and entered the house, and after laying hands on him, he said, ‘Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you were coming has sent me, so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.’ Immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales. He regained his sight and he got up and was baptized and he took food and was strengthened.” (Acts 9:3-19)

That’s the reading. I think you are aware, brothers, that the record of this conversion is not only in chapter 9. One is here in chapter 9, written by the human author, Luke, telling the story, but then we have Paul’s own personal testimony recorded twice. In Acts 22, twenty five years have gone by and now he is, of course, being persecuted, but he’s giving his testimony in Hebrew on the steps of the temple to the Hebrew people. Two years later, Acts 26, he stands before King Agrippa, twenty-seven years after the fact, and he now stands up and recalls, and very close after this he himself was martyred and went into the presence of the Lord.

By pooling those three accounts together, Acts 9, Acts 22 and Acts 26, we have the full record of what happened on the Damascus Road. I

just want to say in passing what I'm sure you already know, that there are additional facts given in his testimony that we didn't read in the Acts 9 account. That doesn't mean there are contradictions, and it certainly doesn't mean what I read in one of my commentaries that through the years people tend to embellish things, so they say that this testimony got a little fatter, and it was enlarged and it was embellished. They say that there is that tendency to exaggerate in order to make the original event more dramatic. Probably that's true of me and maybe that's true of you, but that's not true of the Apostle Paul. This is inspired; there's nothing exaggerated here.

For example, in Acts 9 we didn't know this took place at high noon. We learn that from his testimony. And we didn't know that the light that shone around him, he described as brighter than the noonday sun. We learn that later. In Acts 9 we only read that he asked one question. We read in Acts 9, "Who are you, Lord?" But later we find out that he asked two questions. He also said, "What would you have me do, Lord?" I think that's important. In Acts 9 it looks like only Saul fell down to the ground, but when you read the other records, everybody fell down to the ground. In Acts 9 it looks like they all heard a voice, but later we find out some heard a sound, but it didn't register as a voice, so they didn't understand what was said. It looks as if in chapter 9 there was a small conversation between Saul and the Lord, "Who are you?" and He gives an answer, and then He says, "Arise and go to Damascus and it will be told you what to do." That's it. If it wasn't for Acts 26 we wouldn't know that it was quite a long conversation; they had a back and forth. There was an amazing amount of information that was given. It's only his testimony before Agrippa that tells us that he had a problem with his conscience, "It's hard for you to kick against the goad." Do you see what I'm saying? If it weren't for Acts 22 we would have never known that Jesus called Himself "the Nazarene". In the original record it just says, "Jesus, whom you are persecuting." But then we find out it's Jesus the Nazarene, and so on.

I'm going to try to pool it together as we tell the story, but we're not out to just hear all of the correct facts; we love principles, and we want life, and we want to know the revelation of the Lord. Let me quote again,

“Last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me, also, and I am the least of the apostles, not fit to be called an apostle because I persecuted the church of God.” (1 Corinthians 15:8)

Last of all? Not literally, but *finally* he did it last of all, and later He'll appear to John, and so on, but He did it last to say, “This is the last preparation; Jesus is not dead, He is not gone; He's alive and He's alive in you, and He's alive to breathe on you and to give you a new creation, not to change your life, but to give you an exchanged life. Look at my exchanged life.” I explained it yesterday; it's not a change but an exchange.

WHAT DID PAUL SEE?

Now, let's look at what happened, what did he see? It's called a vision. He told Agrippa,

**“I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision.”
(Acts 26:19)**

That could throw you off a little because, though it's called a vision, it's not a vision as we usually think about a vision. People who have visions in the Bible see something in their mind, in their brain, in their spirit. Zachariah had eight visions in one night. That was a long night for him, eight visions, one right after another, and he was lying in his bed. He didn't actually see, but God showed him in his mind, like in a dream. This is not that way. The Holy Spirit is calling this a vision to call attention to your eyes/your vision. He tells the story in terms of your vision. What did he see? He claims that he saw Jesus literally,

and not just some dream that God gave him and not just some vision in his spirit; it was literal and it was true and it was actual and it was physical. He had a revelation of the Lord, and that's why he puts himself in the list. He said, "How did Mary see him? How did Thomas see him? Was that just in their mind? It was a vision but it was literal with their eyes that they saw Him. He is saying, "I saw Him as really as Peter saw him. I saw Him as really as the five hundred saw Him. I saw Him as really as the disciples on the Emmaus Road saw Him. I saw Him as really as He appeared in the Upper Room and invited them to take the fingers of their hand and put them in His glory wound. I saw Him." He uses that later to prove his apostleship, "I was an eyewitness of the resurrection; I saw Him." So, we need to understand that.

Notice with me, please, and I'm not making this up, that the Holy Spirit seems to tell the story in terms of vision, in terms of his eyes. When Saul rode into Damascus that day he had one set of eyes—these eyes (natural). That journey from Jerusalem to Damascus was between one hundred and thirty-six and one hundred and sixty miles depending on which route you took. In those days travel was slower than it is today, and a considerable portion of that, no matter which journey he took, had to take him through the desert. They say that was about a six or seven day trip. There is reason to believe the saints knew that he was coming, because Ananias made some comments that, "He's been to the high priest and he's got the papers and we know what he can do to us."

In addition to that first set of eyes (natural) we know he had a conscience that was bothering him. The Lord fills us in on that...

"When we had all fallen to the ground I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew dialect, 'Saul, Saul why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.'" (Acts 26:14)

We know he had a conscience, that built-in preacher. A goad was a sharp piece of iron that was put on the end of stick and was used to prod. The ox driver would prod the ox and urge the animal either to stand still, go on or change direction. He was skilled and he knew how to use the goad, and he would poke that animal. If the animal kicked, resisted, held back, or was stubborn, who got hurt? Exactly right, the animal got hurt. That's what God was saying, "I've been poking you, and I've been pricking you with this goad, and I've been working on you, and you've been kicking back, and who is hurt?"

We can guess how God was using that goad. I'm quite sure the stoning of Stephen was on his mind. That made a tremendous impression. Later on he called attention to that; that was bothering him. And then when we read the testimony, one of his statements was, "I tried to get them to blaspheme." Do you know what is implied in that? It didn't work. "*I tried* to get them to blaspheme." It must have been an amazing thing to watch these Christians and how they responded to this persecution. Not only Stephen was bothering him, but all these Christians as they were suffering were bothering him. His testimony—he was kicking against the goad; His inner conscience was sort of another set of eyes. So, he comes in with these eyes (natural) and he's got that bad conscience. Then we read,

"Suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him, and Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing." (Acts 9:3)

He comes to town with good eyesight, and then he's got a little conscience in there, and that's looking at him, too. Then he sees a light, and then he sees nothing. Do you see how this story is being told in terms of his eyes?

In Acts he gives the same testimony,

“Since I could not see, because of the brightness of the light, I was led by the hand with those who were with me and came into Damascus.” (Acts 22:11)

We know that blindness lasted three days...

“He was three days without sight.” (Acts 9:9)

He comes to town with this set of eyes (natural) and a conscience. All of a sudden, he loses this set of eyes (natural) and he's blind. Then we read (this is God speaking to Ananias),

“And the Lord said to him, ‘Get up and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for a man from Tarsus named Saul. He is praying,’ (now watch), ‘and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay hands on him, so that he might gain his sight.’ (Acts 9:11&12)

So, he comes to town with one set of eyes (natural), and then he's got a conscience that's been bothering him, and then he sees the light, and then he loses this set of eyes (natural), and then he gets a vision. What's the vision? It's not with these eyes (natural); it's a different use of the word “vision”.

Now, in his mind, in his spirit (however God communicated), he gets the information that a man is going to come whose name is Ananias, and he's going to lay hands on him and he's going to be able to see. I'm not trying to confuse you; I'm saying that as I read how the Holy Spirit wrote this, I think He's saying, “Pay attention to his eyes. Watch what's going on because he has eyes, and then he has a conscience and then he sees a light, and then he doesn't have eyes, and then he has a vision. And then, as the story goes on, Ananias comes in and says, ‘God has sent me to you,’ scales fall off his eyes, and then he sees.” Once again, the attention is called to the eyes. He comes in with one set

(natural), he has a conscience, he sees the Lord, he loses that set and he gets a vision, and God opens his eyes (natural & spiritual), and scales fall off his eyes, and it's told about the eyes because his testimony is going to be this, Last preparation, twenty-seven years later, they're saying, "Explain yourself, explain your life, explain your ministry, explain your message," and he can only say one thing, "A long time ago I saw Jesus." That's his testimony, "I saw Jesus."

That's what Mary said, "I've seen the Lord." That's Thomas, "My Lord and my God!" Emmaus Road, "Didn't our hearts burn within us when He showed Himself?" It's all about seeing Jesus, and that's what Damascus is all about; it's about seeing the Lord, and since he's the model convert, he says, "You need to understand what I saw that day when I saw Jesus, and how these eyes were closed and these eyes were open, and then scales fell off these eyes, and then I got new eyes, and then I got a new life." He wants us to understand that it's all about seeing Jesus. May God help us understand this!

Paul's eyes were opened to this evil world

So, what did this dear brother see when he saw Jesus? I'm going to mention three things. There are probably a lot more, but you need three points for a good sermon (I speak as a fool). Let me just mention several of the things, and then we'll, hopefully, by God's grace pull it altogether. When he saw Jesus, his eyes were also open to this present evil world. He saw this world...

"Immediately, there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he regained his sight, and he got up and was baptized." (Acts 9:18)

When those scales fell from his eyes, he saw. Now, it's very possible that the chorus we sing, "Turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full in His wonderful face, and the things of earth will grow strangely dim," took place. I know it took place spiritually for him, but it might have taken place literally for him. Commentators call attention to the fact that Paul

had bad eyesight. Have you ever read that? They get that from Galatians,

“When I first came to you, you were willing to give your eyes for me.” (Galatians 4:15)

Then as he closes the epistle with,

“See with what large letters I am writing this.” (Galatians 6:11)

That was the idea, that he had to write with large letters. Maybe he had bad eyes before Damascus. We don't know when he got bad eyesight. I happen to think that perhaps it was after seeing Jesus. I love to picture him now seeing the world blurry, because that's what it is; it's that way. But I know it's spiritual; he has, by seeing Jesus, a brand-new vision of the world.

Listen to his testimony,

“Whatever things were gain to me, those I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count but rubbish, that I might gain Christ.” (Philippians 3:7&8)

He saw Jesus, and now he sees the world, but it's all different. From that moment everything is different, and now he sees it for what it is. He sees through the veneer. He knows that what Solomon said is true, “Vanity, vanity, all is vanity and vexation of spirit.” When I say, “the world”, I'm not just talking about flowers and trees and birds and animals and the deep blue sea. I'm talking about the world as John records it,

“All that's in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life.” (1 John 2:16)

He saw all of that when he saw Jesus. I love the way John divides that because that is really a description of the world, and that's all it can do. The world can only appeal to your flesh; that's it, and it's all show; it's not real. It's all vanity; it's all glitter. You can have all these beautiful colors in a bubble but try to lay hold of it. It's not there; it's nothing and it's not true. It appeals to man's pride and his honor and his dignity, but it's vanity and it's vexation and it's not real. It's so artificial, and he saw that. It's all imaginary, and man makes it up

Where did we get value on this stuff? Gold is a stone. It's pretty but it's stone. Gems are just stones, that's all they are. We say that they're worth something, and so when we come to town, they say, "Oh, we like these, we like glass." "Okay, that's your value; I'll trade you and we'll give you beads and glass, and you give us those yellow stones." Man just makes it up, and then he'll die for it, and he'll fight for it, and he'll covet, and he'll try to hold onto it, but it's not real. Hanging jewelry on a body (I have nothing against jewelry), but you might as well hang it on a limb of a tree. It doesn't add anything. It's all fake. If you get a bed frame made out of brass, are you going to sleep better? A golden bed, and then you get food served on a silver platter, is it going to taste any better? What is perfume? It's the sweat and mucus of beasts and trees. Silk is the excrement of worms. It's a bag of dirt, and they call it a treasure. He saw that when he saw Jesus. He saw everything as it was. It's a lie; it's a deceit.

One evidence of it is if you are a billionaire and you have a toothache, are you going to enjoy your money? A billion dollars isn't going to help you if you've got a toothache. Then you go to the deathbed, is that going to help you then?

**"Riches do not profit in the day of death."
(Proverbs 11:4)**

They are nothing. You have a man on his deathbed, he'd give his whole fortune in order to live. For him life is better than gold. It's only to the

Christian that loving kindness is better than life. It's only to us who have seen the value. Only those who see Jesus see the world for what it is.

I meet a lot of Christians, and it makes me laugh sometimes, and also, I've been through a lot of this myself, how Christians struggle with surrender. They say, "Oh, I can't give that up and I can't give this thing up." They don't need to work on surrender; they need to see Jesus. If you see Jesus, you'll see the world for what it really is. I have never yet met any person who struggled giving up rubbish; that's easy. The King James Bible calls it "dung". "Surrender all of that dung." "Oh no, I don't want to let it go; it's so precious." It's because you don't see it for what it is. Until you see Christ you can't see the world.

Let me make another comment about 1 John 2:16,

"All that's in the world, the lust of flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life." (1 John 2:16)

We talk a lot about worldliness, and we don't want to be worldly Christians; we want to be spiritual Christians. In that verse what's the opposite of the world? He said, "All that's in the world," but there's an opposite of the world. When we speak about not being worldly, we have our little list. It depends upon what part of the country you come from. They say, "I'm not going to be worldly, and I'm not going to smoke, and I'm not going to dance, and I'm not going to play contact sports, and I'm not going to gamble, and I'm not going to drink, or at least I'm not going to excessively drink, and I'm not going to get involved in materialism, and I'm going to choose the right friends and the right clothes, and this is how long my hem will be." It depends on where you are from; that's worldliness.

God includes more under worldliness than Christians do.

"The world is passing away and it's lusts, but the will of God abides forever." (1 John 2:17)

The opposite of worldliness is the will of God. What is worldliness? It's anything that is not the will of God—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life and anything that is not the will of God. In that moment when he saw Jesus, he was delivered from worldliness in all its forms, and delivered unto the will of God. When Jesus said, “Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world,” He was actually saying, “Be of good cheer, for I have overcome everything that stands in the way of the will of God.” It's no wonder to be of good cheer! And I've got better cheer for you, brothers. The One who has overcome the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life—who has overcome everything that stands in the way of the will of God in your life is neither dead nor gone, but He's alive and He's alive in you. It's an awesome, awesome thing. He saw that when he saw Jesus.

Listen to this summary that Ananias gives. If you want a summary of the Christian life, here it is:

“And he said, ‘The God of our fathers has appointed you to know His will, to see the righteous One and to hear utterance from His mouth.’ (Acts 22:14)

Isn't that something? And he's the model convert because He appeared to you, too. When He showed you Christ He said, **“Do you want to know what the Christian life is? Know the will of God, see the Lord, hear His word.”** That's it. It's a glorious truth. When I see Jesus, I'll see the world for what it is.

Paul saw the church

Let me show you another thing. He not only saw the world by seeing Jesus, and I'm sure you've heard this; he saw the church. Have you heard that? He saw the body of Christ. There are a couple of indications of it. I love:

**“Ananias departed and entered the house, and after laying his hands on him he said, ‘Brother Saul.’”
(Acts 9:17)**

Can you imagine what that meant to that man—“Brother Saul”? When you read the record, it’s amazing, as there’s a little play on words because Saul was coming to town to lay his hands on the Christians. Isn’t that interesting? What happened instead? Ananias, blessed by God, laid his hands on Saul. That’s quite a difference. If Saul had a chance he would have grabbed Ananias and grabbed his family and all his children off to the dungeon, but instead he hears the word, “brother”. Whew! That had to be humbling to hear that.

Some question when Paul got saved. Did he get saved on the Damascus Road when he saw the light? Did he get saved three days later when the scales fell off his eyes? Did he get saved when Ananias said, “Arise and be baptized and wash away your sins.”? When exactly did he get saved? I don’t know, but I don’t think Ananias would have said “brother” if he wasn’t brother at that point. At least that satisfies it for me. In this connection I love where he says,

“Greet Andronicus and Junius, my kinsman, who were in Christ before me.” (Romans 16:7)

In other words, he had family members who knew Jesus before he did. We read that he’s coming to town to lay hold of Christians; he’s coming after his family. He would have killed his family. If you had asked anyone at that time, “Who is the number one enemy of the Lord Jesus Christ?” without a question, all the way from Jerusalem to Damascus, they would have said, “Saul of Tarsus is the number one enemy.” But now, because he saw Jesus, he’s “brother”, “Brother Saul”. He’s in the family. Do you realize the change there, the glorious difference? He’s in the family now, and there’s even a stronger evidence that he saw the church.

“Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?’ And he said, ‘Who are You, Lord?’ He said, ‘I am Jesus whom you are persecuting.’” (Acts 9:4&5)

He could have argued, “I’m not persecuting You; I’m persecuting people; I’m persecuting men and women and children. Why do you say I’m persecuting You?” “It’s because we’re one, and you can’t touch them without touching Me.” In that moment he saw so much. He saw that he was part of a family. He saw that the church, the universal church was united to the head; they are one. He saw the Lord by seeing the Lord; He saw the church. So many today are trying to fight the world and struggle with the flesh. They’re looking at the body; there’s a lot of talk about the body life, and they’re looking at the body. If you see Jesus, you’ll see the body; you don’t have to worry about seeing the body. Make sure that you are seeing the Lord.

Paul saw the rejected Savior

There’s one other thing he saw, and we’ll wrap it up.

“I answered, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ and He said to me, “I’m Jesus the Nazarene whom you are persecuting.” (Acts 22:8)

He didn’t say, “I *was* Jesus the Nazarene.” That’s how I would have written it. “I used to be, when I lived on the earth in My incarnate body for thirty-three and a half years, I was Jesus the Nazarene,” but now He’s glorified and He has ascended and He’s at the Father’s right hand, and He still identifies Himself as Jesus the Nazarene. I’ll be honest with you, I was a little surprised that the word Nazareth made it to heaven. I didn’t expect that. I didn’t expect Him in His glorified state to identify Himself that way. It’s Nathaniel’s question, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” I think the point that He’s making is this, that Saul not only saw the Lord Jesus and has to identify with Him, but he’s identifying with a rejected Savior, Jesus the Nazarene. Immediately, he’s outside the camp. He’s identifying with Christ

outside the camp. When Paul received the revelation of Jesus, he had the whole ball of wax right there.

Paul saw Jesus as Lord, the will of God, and ministry

I told you that there are three different accounts, and I went through the accounts to see how they were different, but I went through the accounts, also, to see what is the same in every account and what God emphasizes. In all three accounts we have this same thing, the Lordship of Jesus Christ. In all three accounts he stresses, “Lord, who are you? Lord, what would you have me to do?” None of this talk about, “I’ll accept Him as my Savior today and maybe someday down the road I’ll come to know Him as Lord.” There’s none of that. “As you’ve received Christ Jesus, the Lord, so walk in Him.” You see, when Paul was blinded by the revelation of the Lord Jesus, according to Acts 9, he went straight to prayer. This was real; this was radical in his life. When he heard the name Jesus of Nazareth, he identified with a rejected Savior, and when he was told to arise and be baptized for the remission of sins, he identified with guilty sinners. He is entering in. This is an amazing moment.

Paul saw the exchanged life

Isaiah 36:26 promised that God would take away the stoney heart, and Paul’s heart was stoney, insensitive and had no feeling, and now all of a sudden he has a heart of flesh; he’s sensitive, he’s tender. You open the epistles and what do you read about this maniac, this terrorist who was terrorizing Christians? We read about his tears, over and over again about his tears of suffering, his tears of concern for all the churches, his tears of love. Where did he get those tears? It’s Jesus, His life, and He’s weeping over Jerusalem through His channel—through Paul. It is not Paul anymore; it’s been an exchanged life.

“The Lord said to him, ‘Go; he’s a chosen instrument of Mine to bear My name before the gentiles and kings and sons of Israel. I’ll show him

how much he must suffer for My name's sake.”
(Acts 9:16)

I don't know if it's instructive or not; there are certain names that you associate with certain things, and I'm sure Saul had heard these two names—Ananias and Judas. I just have a feeling that he knew those two names, and that all of this would take place in a house named Judas and have a man named Ananias; he knew these men. Now, all of a sudden, in this place his life is redemptive. Now, Ananias begins to tell him about the outworking, his ministry, “You are going to be a witness here, and you're going to go here....” All of the missionary journeys that took place are nothing more than an outworking of that moment; he saw Jesus and he saw the world for what it was. He saw Jesus and he saw the body of Christ, he saw the family, he saw all Christians united to the head, and he knew to touch one is to touch the Lord Himself. He saw Christians. He also saw the will of God. He saw his ministry. He saw his calling. He saw his destiny. He saw how his life would be redemptive. He identified with a rejected Savior. He saw His Lordship. All of that because one day he saw Jesus.

Paul saw that the Lord would continue appearing

This is Ananias speaking,

“Get up and stand on your feet; for this purpose I've appeared to you to appoint you a minister and a witness, not only to the things which you have seen, but also to the things in which I will appear to you, rescuing you from the Jewish people, from the gentiles to whom I'm sending you,” (listen to this), **“To open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light, from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.”** (Acts 26:16)

All he did was see Jesus, and now he has his whole ministry laid out before him, and his ministry is routed in his experience. He got blind and he couldn't see, and God opened his eyes, and now he sees, and he says, "Now you are going to go out and that message is going to go to others." The message comes out of his life, and his life comes out of his vision of Christ, that he had seen Christ. Notice in verse 16, he said, "Not only in what you have seen but in the things to which I will yet appear to you." Damascus was only the first revelation. He was going to get more. He said, **"As I have appeared to you, I will continue to appear to you over and over again."**

So, we come to the end and we're back to this. Brothers, it's thrilling for me to be able to address you because I know a little of your background, and you've heard it before. You've heard it so many times. You've read it and you grew up on it and you cut your teeth on it, and you know it's all about seeing Jesus. After I see Him, then what? You see Him again. And then what? See Him again. He'll keep appearing to you. "You want an explanation of my life, of my ministry of my message of my missionary journeys, of my persecution and why I'm standing here?" he says to Agrippa, "A long time ago, twenty seven years ago, I saw Jesus. That's it, and seeing Him I saw the world, and seeing Him I saw the church, and seeing Him I saw the will of God, and seeing Him I saw my ministry."

IT'S ALL ABOUT SEEING JESUS

Brothers, let me sort of pound it home one more time and release the little bit of burden that's still on my heart. I shudder when I think of how much time Christians spend not seeing Jesus. I said that you see Jesus and you see the world. Well, they spend it on, "Oh, the lust of the flesh! How to have victory over the lust of the flesh! I need to study that. I need to study how to deny myself. I need to study how to face temptation. We've got to have a lesson on spiritual warfare, and

how to fight the devil, and how to stand, and how to know his wiles, and all of that.” Brothers, you need to see Jesus and you’ll see the world, and you’ll have deliverance from that. I shudder to think how many times, how much time Christians spend on the lust of the eyes, on the problem of surrender, “How can I lose my grip? How can I get rid of all this materialism, things that are temporal, things that are physical, things that are shakable?” and programs on how to have your finances in order? I promise, see Jesus and all that is going to fall into place. I shudder to think how much time Christians spend on all of these other things—the pride of life, position, human glory and standing and prestige in the community and how to get the testimony out. I shudder to think how much time Christians spend on the will of God rather than the God whose will it is. All of this fell into place when he saw Jesus.

You don’t have to say, “Now, are the three lights lining up? Do I have the word of God, and does that line up with circumstances, and does that line up with peace in my heart? If that all comes together, then I know the will of God. Peace in my heart, now there’s the voice of the Holy Spirit, and the voice of the human spirit, and the voice of the evil spirit. How am I going to know which is His voice?” You don’t have to worry about any of that. See Jesus, and all of that falls into place. You don’t need to study the early church and see how they did it. You don’t need to get your eyes on the body and on the members and how we’re all supposed to get together. See Christ and you’ll see the unity of the body. See Christ and you’ll see the church. See Christ and you’ll see the will of God. See Christ and you’ll see your place in the history of redemption. It’s all about seeing Jesus, and when you are done seeing Him, then see Him again.

Paul said this, “That’s the last preparation, because the real issue is that He’s neither dead nor gone but He’s alive and He’s alive in you.” And if you want to really know Him, the One dwelling in your heart, Mary says, “You’ve got to see the Lord.” Thomas says, “You’ve got to see

Him in this book.” The Emmaus disciples said, “You’ve got to see Him in this book by the Holy Spirit.” The Upper Room disciples say, “You’ve got to see Him in this book by the Holy Spirit in such a way that the Spirit of God breathes on you and you become a new creation.” And then Paul comes along and says, “You’ve got to understand the new creation; the new creation is not a changed life; it’s an exchanged life.” As you behold Him, He manifests Himself through you. All you need to know about this world, about the will of God, about the church, about your place, your ministry, your identification, and all you need to know about everything is a by-product from seeing the Lord.

You’ve seen Him; I know everybody has at least once, and you were never the same. That’s just the threshold. See Him again by revelation. Have you seen Him as the vine? Have you seen Him as the shepherd? Have you seen Him as the potter? Have you seen Him as the smelter? Have you seen Him as the comforter? Have you seen Him as the guide? Have you seen Him as the groom? Have you seen Him as whatever—the rock, the fortress, the door? Every time He reveals Himself, another Damascus takes place, and there is (I almost said change). There is a change, brothers. When you see Him you are transformed and He is allowed to live through you more and more, and more and more, and that is what He has called us to. May we leave this place with the testimony of Mary Magdalene, “I have seen the Lord!” Let’s pray...

Father, thank You so much for preparing your people by these appearances. Now, Lord, we thank You that You’ve prepared us, as well, and all these things are so true and You do indwell us, and You live inside of us. You have overcome the world and everything that stands in the way of the will of God in our life. Keep showing us the Lord Jesus, we pray. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

THE EXCHANGED LIFE

Poem by Ed Miller

Not to impress or earn a crown or merit anything
But out of love and thankfulness I sought to please my King.
For stooping love, and grace so free toward one, so lost and low
I set my heart to pay the debt of gratitude I owe.

How can I, pardoned, yield Him less than all I have and am?
What other song is suitable than “Worthy is the Lamb”?
And, so it was, I set my heart to serve with life and limb
And never take another breath that wasn’t unto Him!

The more I tried to serve the Lord and bless His worthy name,
The more I grieved Him by my sin—more guilty I became.
Repent! Confess! And rise again—old promises renew
Became the story of my life as I, more weary grew!

Why was the promised “easy yoke” so difficult to wear?
And why, the burden, if so light, a crushing weight to bear?
Why, if my spirit’s will was strong, His face alone to seek—
Why did I fail at every turn? Why was my flesh so weak?

If love and gratitude fall short, what motive can there be?
And who will praise, if it is not redeemed humanity?
My life was all I had to give and happily resign,
And even that, by blood, was His and wasn’t even mine.

By fits and starts my anxious heart, now void of peace and rest
Drudged on in fruitless agony, to satisfy my quest.
No righteousness had I to bring; no motive, foul or fair;
The dream I had to live for Him, expired in despair!

Undone! I fell before the Lord and called upon His name
Without a single offering—as, when at first, I came.
And now, as then, my inner eyes were opened wide to see
Apart from Christ, my Substitute, there was no hope for me!

I knew full well, for me He died, for me His blood was shed;
I also knew it was for me, He rose up from the dead.
I had no doubt, my Substitute died in my stead and place.
That's why I sought to live for Him, to thank Him for such grace!

But, can it be? Oh, glorious day! Can such a thing be true?
The tidings of a Substitute—refreshing as the dew—
Broke on my heart, and turned at once my water into wine!
His purpose was to live for me—exchange His life for mine!

It is no longer I who lives, but Christ who lives in me—
No longer must I do for Him; I simply have to be!
As once, He lived and died on earth, and rose for sinful men,
He now indwells my thankful heart to do it once again!

Now, from my Risen Head, there flows to me, a life divine;
A fruitful branch I have become—abiding in the vine;
The joy I seek to bring to Him, the thanks I long to give
I offer in my privilege: allowing Him to live!

SUMMARY OF EXCHANGED LIFE

CHAPTER ONE

Principle #1: No clinging in the flesh:

“If we’re going to be prepared to have union with an indwelling Christ, someday, some way, somehow, we’ve got to come to the place where it’s only about seeing the Lord. It’s not about ministry, it’s not about service, it’s not about anything else. It’s not only about having sort of a creedal grip, a theological, ‘I know He’s dead, and I know the cross, and I know what He died for me,’ but it’s not trying to explain everything apart from His life, ‘I don’t need His life to explain what’s going on,’ and then trying to rationalize and figure everything out. We need His life for the power and strength to serve Him. It’s only about having a personal relationship with Jesus and seeing only Him.”

“From now on we recognize no one according to the flesh, and even though we’ve known Christ according to flesh, yet now we know Him in this way no longer.” (2 Corinthians 5:16)

Principle #2 : Ask Him.

“Even though it’s all by grace, He said, ‘Ask Me. If you want it, I’m willing to do it, if you will ask Me. I will let you ask Me to do all of that.’”

“This, also, I will let the house of Israel ask Me to do for them.” (Ezekiel 36:37)

CHAPTER TWO

Principle #3: Not by Sight but by Faith

“We need to see the Lord by faith in this book based on inspired, reliable witnesses.”

“Jesus said, ‘Because you’ve seen me, have you believed? Blessed are they who did not see and yet believe.’” (John 20:29)

Principle #4 – Bible Revelation of the Lord

“I need to see the Lord, I need to see the Lord by faith in this book, but now I need God to open my eyes (spiritual) to the revelation that’s in this book. I need Him to open my understanding and show me Christ in all of the scriptures.”

“And they said, ‘Were not our hearts burning within us while He was speaking to us on the road while He was explaining the scriptures to us!’” (Luke 24:32)

“No one can call Jesus Lord in reality except by the Holy Spirit.” (1 Corinthians 12:3)

Principle #5 – New Creation in Jesus

“Now, based on the testimony of Mary and Peter and James and five hundred people and the Emmaus disciples and the Upper Room crowd, we also say, ‘He’s not dead; He’s alive.’”

“And He opened their minds to understand the scriptures.” (Luke 24:25)

CHAPTER THREE

Principle #6 – The Exchanged Life – true conversion

“All true conversions must have the grace of God.”

“But by the grace of God, I am what I am and His grace toward me did not prove vain. I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me.” (1 Corinthians 15:5-8)

“All true conversions are revelations. We say a conversion is a decision for Jesus. I’m not ruling out decisions for Jesus, but that’s not conversion. You can make all the decisions in the world, but if there is no revelation of Christ, there’s no salvation.”

**“But when God, who had set me apart even from my mother’s womb and called me through His grace, was pleased to reveal His Son in me.”
(Galatians 1:15)**

“It’s by the grace of God, and it’s by the revelation of Jesus Christ, it is a humbling of a person, it’s an awakening.”

Principle #7 – Paul is God’s illustration of the Christian life

“There is only one complete model/example of Christian living, and that’s the Apostle Paul. He’s God’s illustration; that’s not my idea; that’s not Paul’s idea; that’s God’s idea. God said, ‘I’m going to give you one illustration, and I’m going to take this brother through every Christian experience,’ and that’s why Paul said, ‘I spoke with tongues more than anybody; I’ve been through everything. I know all about all the gifts; I know about everything,’ because God took that one man through.”

“For this reason I found mercy, in order that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience as an example for all who would

believe on Him for eternal life.” (1 Timothy 1:16&17)

Principle #8 – Difference between a changed life and an exchanged life

“For through the Law I died to the Law, that I might live to God. I’ve been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me.” (Galatians 2:19&20)

“That’s not a change; that’s an exchange; you’re dead and your life is hid.”

Principle #9 – What is meant by “the flesh”

“I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. The willing is present with me but the doing of the good is not.” (Romans 7:18)

“He’s not talking about some change in some mood or direction in my heart. I don’t have an inclination that needs to be changed. It’s me, not an inclination in me; it’s me that needs to be dealt with. There are many negative sides of the flesh. The flesh also has a very refined side, and that is still flesh. So, we’re all flesh, but it’s you and it’s me. Jesus told Nicodemus,”

“That which is flesh is flesh.” (John 3:6)

“It will always be flesh. It will never be anything but flesh. Jesus didn’t come to improve it.”

Principle #10 - The exchanged life is a mystery

“Christ in His mystical body is the same mystery as Christ in His incarnate body, and I’m all done, brothers, trying to explain it. I don’t

think anybody else can, at least they haven't to my satisfaction. I can't explain it. I can declare it. So, let me declare it. God lives in you. One hundred percent of the Trinity lives in you. He does! I can't explain it. And you're dead, but you're not dead; you're alive. It's Him, but it's you, but it's Him. It's hypostatic union. I can't explain it. I just know it's true. He lives in me and you can't will until you are drawn, but you've got to will and work out your own salvation. I can't put it together. I just know it's true. You can call it whatever you want to call it; God lives in you. It is not you; it is Him. You are alive, but you are dead. Take it by cold blooded faith."

"Since it's Him in you, it's still you, and to all those who look, it looks like a change. You still think, but now according to the record,"

"You have the mind of Christ." (1 Corinthians 2:16)

**"The love of God is poured out into your life."
(Romans 5:5)**

CHAPTER FOUR

Principle #11 – Our spiritual eyes need to be opened

"Last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me, also, and I am the least of the apostles, not fit to be called an apostle because I persecuted the church of God." (1 Corinthians 15:8)

"And the Lord said to him, 'Get up and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for a man from Tarsus named Saul. He is praying, and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay hands on him, so that he might gain his sight.'" (Acts 9:11&12)

Principle #12 – Our eyes will be opened to this evil world

“By seeing Jesus, we have a brand-new vision of this world.”

“Immediately, there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he regained his sight, and he got up and was baptized.” (Acts 9:18)

“Whatever things were gain to me, those I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count but rubbish, that I might gain Christ.” (Philippians 3:7&8)

“When I say, ‘the world’, I’m not just talking about flowers and trees and birds and animals and the deep blue sea. I’m talking about the world as John records it,”

“All that’s in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life.” (1 John 2:16)

“The world is passing away and it’s lusts, but the will of God abides forever.” (1 John 2:17)

“The opposite of worldliness is the will of God. What is worldliness? It’s anything that is not the will of God—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life and anything that is not the will of God.”

“If you want a summary of the Christian life, here it is,”

“And he said, ‘The God of our fathers has appointed you to know His will, to see the righteous One and to hear utterance from His mouth.’ (Acts 22:14)

Principle #13 : Our eyes will be opened to see the church

“Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?’ And he said, ‘Who are You, Lord?’ He said, ‘I am Jesus whom you are persecuting.’” (Acts 9:4&5)

“He could have argued, ‘I’m not persecuting You; I’m persecuting people; I’m persecuting men and women and children. Why do you say I’m persecuting You?’ ‘It’s because we’re one, and you can’t touch them without touching Me.’”

There’s a lot of talk about body life/the church. If you see Jesus, you’ll see the body; you don’t have to worry about seeing the body. Make sure that you are seeing the Lord.

Principle #14 – Our eyes will be opened to see the rejected Savior

“I answered, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ and He said to me, “I’m Jesus the Nazarene whom you are persecuting.” (Acts 22:8)

“He didn’t say, ‘I *was* Jesus the Nazarene.’ Saul not only saw the Lord Jesus and has to identify with Him, but he’s identifying with a rejected Savior, Jesus the Nazarene. Immediately, he’s outside the camp. He’s identifying with Christ outside the camp. When Paul received the revelation of Jesus, he had the whole ball of wax right there.”

Principle #15 – We will see Jesus as Lord, then we’ll see the will of God and our ministry

“And he said, “Who are You, Lord?” And He said, “I am Jesus whom you are persecuting, but get up and enter the city, and it will be told you what you must do.” (Acts 9:5&6)

Principle #16 – We will see the exchanged life

**“The Lord said to him, ‘Go; he’s a chosen instrument of Mine to bear My name before the gentiles and kings and sons of Israel. I’ll show him how much he must suffer for My name’s sake.’”
(Acts 9:16)**

Principle #17 – We will see that the Lord will continue appearing

“Get up and stand on your feet; for this purpose I’ve appeared to you to appoint you a minister and a witness, not only to the things which you have seen, but also to the things in which I will appear to you, rescuing you from the Jewish people, from the gentiles to whom I’m sending you to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light, from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.” (Acts 26:16)

Principle #18 – It’s all about seeing Jesus

“You’ve seen Him; I know everybody has at least once, and you were never the same. That’s just the threshold. See Him again by revelation. Have you seen Him as the vine? Have you seen Him as the shepherd? Have you seen Him as the potter? Have you seen Him as the smelter? Have you seen Him as the comforter? Have you seen Him as the guide? Have you seen Him as the groom? Have you seen Him as whatever—the rock, the fortress, the door? Every time He reveals Himself, another Damascus takes place, and there is (I almost said change). There is a change. When you see Him, you are transformed and He is allowed to live through you more and more, and more and more, and that is what He has called us to. May we leave this place with the testimony of Mary Magdalene, ‘I have seen the Lord!’”

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