

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

Taught by Bruce Bickel

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Good morning, men! Good to see all of you. My goodness, encapsulated in rubber now. {LAUGHTER} What's the world coming to. I've got to be careful what I say. Well, today, brothers, we want to begin another examination of the Sermon on the Mount. We're going to Matthew 6, so I would encourage you to open your Bibles. Looking at the Sermon on the Mount; the greatest sermon ever preached. We just finished Matthew 5 last week that ended with this summary statement in verse 48, "You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." That's the summary statement of all of Matthew 5. He introduces a new righteousness, or a new perfection, in that summary statement.

We need to understand the difference between what I mean when I say a new perfection versus an old perfection. The old perfection was one of works. In other words, I had to work myself up to be perfect, and through the things that I did would lead to me to my understanding or my perception or my anticipation of being I can reach perfection. Of course, we know that's a dead end. The new perfection is that it's a result of the function of grace. The summary statement is this new perfection really is defined by who God is, not by who you and I are. Notice that summary statement, the very last thing he says in Matthew 5 is "Be perfect because your Heavenly Father is perfect." The very first thing he says in Matthew 6 is "Be careful." You go from "be perfect," to "be careful," and we'll see what that means in just a moment.

Let me explain something about this last statement of "Be perfect because your Heavenly Father is perfect." When you and I are justified by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, revealed in the Scripture alone, for the glory of God alone, when you and I are justified by faith alone, you will never be more righteous in God's sight than the moment you were first declared righteous, when you were first justified. You'll never be more righteous at that moment in your life than you were at that moment that God declared you as sinlessly perfect and perfectly obedient. You can't improve upon perfection.

Legalism is basically saying, "I can add onto what Christ has done." But you need to understand this, brothers, that when you were declared justified, and justification means God declares you as righteous, you get credit for the sinless perfection and perfect obedience of the work of Christ, at that moment when God declares you justified, you can never be any more righteous in the rest of your life than you will be at very moment. That's what he means when he says, "Be perfect," because you've been given credit for the sinless perfection and perfect obedience.

Now as we move into Matthew 6, he says, "Be careful about your motive," because you've already received the absolute sinless perfection and perfect obedience of Christ, you've been justified by faith. You cannot be more righteous in my sight than you are right now, or ever will be. You see, you cannot improve upon that righteousness because it is something that is, you got for credit for Christ's righteousness, which you can't improve upon. That's the glory of justification. God declares you as sinlessly perfect and perfectly obedient and gives you credit for his obedience and sinless perfection, not your own.

What we have to do is to say, "How do I live that out?" That's when it comes to our motives. That's when we get to Matthew 6. What I'm going to ask us to do, I'm going to start reading Matthew 6, and I want us to read the whole chapter. I'm going to read several verses, then I'm going to stop, and I'd just ask one of you other brothers to pick it up and read the next paragraph or two. Then when we stop, somebody else pick it up and read it, and let's read all of chapter 6 of the book of Matthew. As we do that, let's enter into a moment of silence and just trust that the Holy Spirit will be our teacher and let's

just have a moment of silence and be still and know that he's God before we hear his word.

[SILENCE]

Amen. Now this is the Word of the Lord.

Audience Member: Thanks be to God.

¹Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. ²Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. ³But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you."

The Lord's Prayer

⁵And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. ⁶But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. ⁷And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. ⁸Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. ⁹Pray then like this:"

"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.

¹⁰Your kingdom come,

your will be done,

on earth as it is in heaven.

¹¹Give us this day our daily bread,

¹²and forgive us our debts,

as we also have forgiven our debtors.

¹³And lead us not into temptation,

but deliver us from evil.

¹⁴For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, ¹⁵but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."

Fasting

¹⁶And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. ¹⁷But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, ¹⁸that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you."

Lay Up Treasures in Heaven

¹⁹Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, ²⁰but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. ²²The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, ²³but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness! ²⁴No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.

Do Not Be Anxious

²⁵Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?
²⁶Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? ²⁷And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? ²⁸And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, ²⁹yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. ³⁰But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? ³¹Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'
³²For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all.
³³But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.
³⁴Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble."

This is the Word of the Lord.

Audience Members: Thanks be to God.

Amen, and amen.

Well, brothers, Chapter 5 ends with this wonderful summary statement about this new righteousness that comes through grace. It's a result of our justification by faith alone. It's where you and I get credit for the sinless perfection and perfect obedience of Christ, and you cannot improve upon that. You cannot add to that. That's why you see that summary statement, "Be perfect," because you've been given that at the moment of your first belief. Do you realize in God's eyes you can never be more righteous than you are the moment of your first belief? That's because you're justified by faith alone, and you get credit for the sinless perfection and perfect obedience. That's the new perfection he's talking about here. It's not the old perfection one of works, where you do your good things.

The next thing he tells us in Chapter 6 is a critical understanding of the transition from 5:48 to 6:1 when he says, "Be perfect," then he says, "Be careful." If you'll take a look at your notes on Matthew 6, you'll notice that Jesus concluded Chapter 5 demanding perfection. Then he introduces Chapter 6 with, "Be careful." He's beginning to deal with our motives. In other words, he says, "You understand this new perfection that you have because you've been credit for the sinless perfection and perfect obedience of Christ. Now this new perfection becomes internal. It's not something that's external; it's something that's internal." The old perfection of the old system of works was external. I do these things, I do this, I don't do this, I do this, and now all of a sudden, I realize that I can't keep with all of this stuff, and so you become frustrated because it all depends upon you.

When you get credit for the sinless perfection and perfect obedience of Christ, it now becomes internal. In other words, what are your motives for living out your sinless perfection and perfect obedience? It doesn't mean, as we know from the Scripture, that you live a sinlessly perfect and perfectly obedient life. It doesn't mean that. But it does say, as we move into Chapter 6, you've got to be careful about how you understand the perfection that's been given to you when you were credited with the sinless perfection and perfect obedience of Christ. You've got to be careful about your motives of how do you put that on display. You can't add to it. That's legalism. Antinomianism says the law doesn't make any difference; you can do whatever you want. Legalism says I'm going to add on to something that's already been accomplished.

We need to be careful about our motives. You'll notice the Beatitudes deals with whose blessings do you want, and Chapter 6 deals with who do you want to please. Do you want to please yourself? Do you

want to please the world? Or do you want to please your Heavenly Father who has given you, through justification by faith alone, credit for the sinless perfection and perfect obedience of Christ, which means this. You will never be anymore righteous in God's sight than you are the moment of your first belief. Guys, that is absolutely transformational and liberating, when you realize that my position in Christ is secure because I cannot become any more righteous than I am at the moment of my first belief when I'm justified by faith. That's the security we have in Christ.

Ted Wood and I were discussing by email the other day. He sent me a marvelous thought, just expounding on some things that we've been learning together. He made a summary statement that I thought was rather profound. He said, "How often times when somebody says to you, 'How are you doing in your faith?' you say, 'Oh, I'm doing great,' or 'Okay. I'm doing well,' when really, you're not doing too well at all," when really we ought to say what Ted said to me as he's learning to say this, "I'm not doing too well, but Christ is doing fine." That's really what it, that's what it means when we go from Chapter 5 to Chapter 6. I may not be doing too well in my faith; I may not be exercising all the things I should be, I may be thinking the things I shouldn't be, as Paul says, "Why do I do the things that I don't want to do. I may not be doing that well, but I know this—Christ is." Ted, do you want to add anything to that, please?

Ted: No, I just...it's perfection. {LAUGHTER} It his perfection.

It's his perfection. But that's a wonderful statement. You see. I may not be doing well, but Christ is doing fine, because you get credit for whose perfection? His, not yours. It's his perfection, not ours. That's the new perfection that he's summarizing here in Matthew 5:48. It's all about his living the life through you. So be honest with yourself. Sometimes you can say, "I'm just not doing too well, but I know this; that Christ is doing fine, and it's really Christ in me that makes the difference." That's what it means to be in Christ. You see, Paul uses that expression 129 times to describe a person who has saving faith, has a saving relationship with God the Father, through God the Son, empowered by God the Holy Spirit. He uses that phrase, "in Christ," 129 times. He doesn't use the word "Christian." You see, if you ask somebody, "are you in Christ?" they're really going to know what you mean, or they're going to think you're some sort of a zealot, because they have no idea what you're talking about. "Well no, I'm not in Christ, I'm just a Christian." You see, there's a radical difference. You see, ask somebody if they're a Christian and you'll probably get as many answers to that question as people you ask. But if you ask somebody, "Are you in Christ?" that's a radically different transformational statement.

Jesus now takes us into the rest of the Sermon on the Mount, after he's taught us about this new perfection which comes because of our justification and credit for his sinless perfection and perfect obedience. Now he says that all becomes internal. The expression now, the issue is now, who do you want to please? Do you really want to please the world? Do you want to please the system of this world? Or do you want to please your Heavenly Father, who gave you credit for the sinless perfection and perfect obedience of Christ. It has to deal with our motives.

Notice as we move through this, Chapter 6 deals with who do you want to please, and these demands of righteousness can never be confused with external piety. In other words, demands for righteousness that he has are not necessarily evidenced by the fact of how we live; it's how you think. It's about your motives. All acts of righteousness must be preserved from showmanship. In other words what's your motive? An external act of righteousness can be obliterated by your motive. What's my intent? What's my motive? Jesus is now going to teach us how to live out this new perfection that you get credit for—his perfection.

He's going to teach us how to do that and examining ourselves with the right motive. He does this in four fundamental areas as you look at Matthew 6. All of these have to do with worship. He's really

talking about what's your motive worship. Worship is a style of living; it's not an activity you do on the Lord's day at 11:00 and stop before the Steeler game. It's a way of living. It has to do with your motives. You see, all of life is a motivated act of worship. There are four areas in which he's going to teach us how to live a life of worship, and that is in our giving, in our praying, in our fasting and the way we manage our money.

Do you realize, guys, the way that you manage your money is an act of worship? It's an act of worship. Jesus is going to tell us that. He's going to say one of the ways in which you manage your wealth, how do you handle prosperity, how do you handle all the possessions that I give you. That's an act of worship. Who are you trying to please? Me? Or are you trying to please the world? Or trying to please somebody else at work? You see, those are the issues we're going to deal with. All those four fundamental aspects really define his understanding of worship that is motivated by our understanding of the righteousness that we get through the person and work of Christ.

We may not be doing well in some of these, but Christ is going to do fine. What we do, and I say this not flippantly, but you do the best you can and trust Christ with the rest because he's going to make the difference. The question is what's our motive? That's the issue as we look at this.

Jesus gives these as examples of other acts of righteousness. Here's how he does that. You'll notice that all four of these aspects of worship, he gives a description and then a denunciation of the act. Then he gives an affirmation of the intended results, and then he gives a contrasting description of true holiness and its results. You're going to see some contrasts. He's going to say don't do it this way; do it this way. When you pray, do it this way; don't do it like this. Don't do it like those people who lived under the old perfection of works. Now what you want to do is the new perfection that's internal because you have the right motive.

Just remember this, that often times, what we perceive to be an external act of righteousness may be obliterated or eliminated because the motive is wrong. So it may be Ted's absolutely right. I may not be doing too well, but Christ is doing fine because it's really his righteousness, not mine, that makes the difference.

Let's begin to take a look at some of these. The section goes all the way to Chapter 7:12; begins at 6:1 and goes all the way to Chapter 7:12. You're going to see the believer in worship (verses 1-18). That deals with our relationship to God. We're going to see the believer in wealth (verses 19-34). That's our relationship to the world. Then in Chapter 7:1-12, the believer and his or her walk, the direction of our life, and that's our relationship to the people. That's how we're going to see the rest of the Sermon on the Mount.

Let's take a look, first of all, at verses 1-18—the idea of worship. He starts off with giving. It is more blessed to give than to receive. Now when he uses the word “alms” or “acts of righteousness,” that's what it means. When you give your alms, or as it says here in the English Standard Version, “Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet.” (Matthew 6:2a) In other words the word “alms” means acts of righteousness. That's what it meant in the Hebrew culture. The issue is the manner and the motive of your giving. How are you giving and what's the motive behind it?

The Pharisees liked to advertise their giving. Would somebody read Mark 12:38-40? They liked to advertise their giving. Jesus is saying, “Don't do that,” because they're going to get their reward in full. Here's how he says it while you're turning to Mark 12, “Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward.” (Matthew 6:2) What is their reward? It's the accolade from the system of this world or from other people, but there's no reward in heaven, there's

no blessing from the Heavenly Father. He's saying, first of all, let's not do it the way they do. Somebody read Mark 12:38-40.

Audience Member: *“³⁸And in his teaching he said, ‘Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes and like greetings in the marketplaces ³⁹and have the best seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at feasts, ⁴⁰who devour widows' houses and for a pretense make long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation.’”*

In other words, they like to show off their perceived righteousness, their old righteousness. They like to demonstrate that. You see, we're understanding here in the Sermon on the Mount that the real issue here is not only our manner of our giving, but it's our motive behind it. The hypocrites had several forms of demonstrating their showoffy-ness if you would, calling attention to themselves and their giving. The person uses goodness, but is actually evil. They show that they are being deceptive by their demonstrations.

Let me give you a little history on this. Jesus is warning us about the danger of hypocrisy here; the sin of using religion to cover up our own sin. A hypocrite is not a person who falls short of his high ideals, or who occasionally sins, but a hypocrite is someone who uses their experience to cover up their failures. A hypocrite uses religion to cover up his sins and promote his own gain, his own wellbeing. The Greek word translated “hypocrite” really means an actor who wears a mask. That's what it means. A hypocrite is a person who's wearing a mask because they're giving you an outward demonstration of something, but internally, they're really rotten, because they're deceiving; they're covering up themselves by wearing this mask. That's what he warns us about being a hypocrite. You see, the righteousness of these Pharisees was not only insincere, but it was also dishonest. They practiced their religion for the applause of people and the accolades of men, not for the praise of God.

True righteousness, as we just learned in that statement, “Be perfect for your Heavenly Father is perfect,” comes from within, not from without. We should test ourselves to see whether we are sincere and honest in the way that we give in our Christian commitment in this chapter.

The person is puffed up with his own self-worth, his own self-importance and is blind to his own faults. But his heart is toward other people in the way that they give and the way they don't give. That's part of the role of a hypocrite. You see, they're not only harsh on other people, but they are really trying to cover up themselves. The person who takes himself, talks himself into believing that they're conducting themselves righteously, really will have no interest in the needy; they have their interest in giving for the accolades of men. Their intention is to support the needy, but externally. Jesus is saying we don't do it like that.

What does that mean for us? Well I think there are several implications. First of all, the needy won't complain, but they'll congratulate and continue to give praise to the people who give. They're not going to worry about the motive. All they want is the handout. Understandably so; they're in need, so a hypocrite comes along and gives them something, what are they going to say? “No, check your motive.” They're not going to do that. They're going to say, “Do you have anymore?” They're going to praise you for that. That's what he says, they're going to get their praise, they're going to get their praise from men, but it's not going to be pleasing to the Father.

Secondly, it's play acting motivated by a sense of egotism. Jesus refers to that as to be honored by men. Lastly, he summarizes it by saying they get what they want, but they get nothing from the Father. They get what they want, and that is the praise and the applause of men.

It's very interesting when you look at some of the history of all of these statements that Jesus is speaking

to. Giving alms or taking care of the needy, to the poor, praying and fasting were important disciplines in the religion of the Pharisees. Jesus did not condemn these practices, but he did caution us to make sure that our hearts are right when we do practice them. That's the idea of our motives. There's nothing wrong with giving to the poor; it's the motive behind it, he's says.

The Pharisees used alms giving, or giving to the poor, to gain favor with God and it to do so for the attraction of men, both of which were wrong motives. No amount of giving can purchase salvation, for salvation is a gift. You see, that's why it's important you understand this, brothers, that when you are justified by faith alone in the person and work of Christ of Christ alone, you can never be more righteousness than you are the moment of your first belief. You can't add onto that by giving to the needy.

Why do you give to the needy? You have to check your motive. You don't do that to make yourself more righteous. You don't do that to get the accolades of men. You can't improve upon perfection. You've been given that in the person and work of Christ. It is his righteousness that is the issue, not our activity. The question is how do I express I understand that I have the righteousness of Christ. How do I express that with the right attitude? You have to ask yourself some tough questions. Why am I doing that? That's why the real summary statement of Matthew 6 is whom do you want to please. That's the real issue. Who do I want to please? Do I want to please men? Or do I want to please my Heavenly Father as an expression of my gratitude? That's why we are M8's. We are mission minded members of a movement motivated by mercy for ministry in the marketplace. You see, we understand what mercy is because we understand that God gave us his grace and his mercy, and that we are motivated by the expression of God's mercy to us. Why is it we give? It's because we understand mercy. God has been merciful to us. We give back because of God's mercy. We don't give as the hypocrites do to get the praise and accolades of people.

You see, our sinful nature is so subtle that it can defile every good thing that we do. We have to be very careful of that. Giving to the poor, giving to the needy, giving our tithes and our offerings and our worship, we have to be careful of our sinful human nature, which can defame that, even though the intention is good. That makes us like the Pharisees when we call attention to ourselves, to what we're doing.

***Ted:** I just, I think we can all think of people who fit the role of hypocrite, perhaps a well-known televangelist who lives a lavish lifestyle, I mean, we might think of that. But I think the hypocrisy here is perhaps more subtle, and I'm just wondering what's going...how, maybe you can think of some examples of how we are...forget those guys on TV, but how are we personally hypocritical? I'm sitting here thinking, "Gee whiz, I'm just a humble guy. I don't..." {LAUGHTER}*

Well, that was just an example. {LAUGHTER} No, here's a question that might be helpful in this whole realm of hypocrisy. Can I rejoice when somebody can do what I do well, but they do it better? Can I rejoice when what I want to do, and I know I do it well, but somebody else does it and does it better, in the church? Let's just say you know that you're a good teacher. But somebody else can teach better than you, but you know you're a good teacher, and you really want to teach. But you know there's somebody else who might do that more effectively than you do. Can you rejoice in that and let them do it? You see, that's a question of motive. Yes, you have this gift. Just because you have a gift doesn't mean you have to use it. Just because you have a gift doesn't mean God's going to let you use it. The real issue is what's my motive? Can I rejoice when somebody can do what I do well and do it better than I do? Can I rejoice in that and let them do it? You see, that's a tough one for us. Especially for those people who are up front. That's a question I have to ask myself.

***Audience Member:** Isn't that an exercise of will, conscience, because you know it's right, because the*

human part of you, the emotional part of you, you have to battle that, but then you, but you want to do that because you know what's best for the [UNCLEAR].

Well hopefully that would be the right attitude, and that's the attitude you'd have, but it's really a matter of submission, not a matter of the will, it's a matter of submission. I've just to submit. You see, here's the definition of a disciple, according to Jesus. If you want to come after me, you've got to learn three character qualities—self-denial, self-sacrifice and self-submission. Am I willing to submit? It's not a matter of yielding; it's a matter of submitting. I don't like the word "yield" because it puts too much pressure upon me. It means, "Oh, I've got to choose to do this," so all you need to do, Bruce, is just yield. Well how do you do that? I don't know how to yield. My goodness, I struggle with those things. I know I need this. I need to submit. The Scripture says do this—I need to submit to that.

Don: *When Jesus says, "Do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing," does that mean, and here's the subtlety that Ted was talking about, I might not want to let men know that, "Oh, look what I've done," but I could say it to myself or think it in myself.*

Sure.

Don: *And that's the hard part. God has to convict me, just do it, and don't even congratulate yourself in and of yourself.*

Amen to that. That's a wonderful understanding of that. Don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing. It doesn't mean you don't do it publicly. It means you've got to examine yourself. Don't congratulate yourself for an act of righteousness that you're improving upon the righteousness you already have because of the perfection of his righteousness is Christ's righteousness, not yours. You don't add to that. You can't add...what you're doing is you're expressing it. You're expressing your gratitude by your giving. So don't even congratulate yourself. It's a good illustration, Don.

Audience Member: *Would you please explain when you said if you have a gift or a talent, God might not want you to use it?*

I'm not saying he may not want you to. He may not let you use it, because of your attitude, because of your motive. Just because you have a gift, doesn't necessarily mean you have to use it. If you don't have the right attitude and the right motive, he may not let you use ever at all, because of Matthew 6. And yet, you're saying, "Oh I need to do this. I need to do this. I need to go start this because that's my calling." Well if you don't have the right motive and the right calling, and they don't match, the Lord may never let you use it anyway. Just because you have a gift doesn't necessarily mean he's going to let you use it.

Bill: *Been a lot of emphasis recently in the church about our gift or my gift. Final analysis, it's not ours, it's God's gift for the church.*

Absolutely. That's why God gives gifts to the church. It's not to build your reputation or to put you in a position to start a 501C3. That's the reason for the gift. The gift is for the edification of the church. If it's not building up the church, you don't have the right motive. It's not to give you a platform. It's not to give me a platform. It is to build up the church. The gifts of the body are strictly for one thing—the edification of the church.

That's why when you're examining yourself...let's just take the example. Well, if I might use myself. I'm not saying I'm a model of anything, but I'll just tell you how I applied what Bill just suggested. When I was with the ministry of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, I began to get much more excited about teaching the Scripture than I did administration. Many of our staff said, "Bruce, could you spend

more time teaching us the Scripture at our staff meetings, rather than going through administrative procedures.” I began to do that and I started teaching a class in my Sunday school at church. People began to say, “We’d like you to do more of this.” So I said, “Well, I need to examine myself to see if I do have the gift of being a pastor/teacher.” It’s a gift. It’s not a right. It’s a gift. Now, who’s going to know that? Who’s going to recognize it? The body of Christ. Exactly. You don’t determine your spiritual gift in a vacuum. You determine it in the body of Christ. They are the ones who are going to benefit from it. They’re the ones who are going to recognize it, if it’s legitimately of God. It’s not your gift; it’s his gift to you to give to them. They have to be the ones to recognize that, “Yes, we recognize that. You are a gift to that.”

I took the next year off to really discern whether or not that was true in my life. I went and studied with three people as part of my seminary work. I said, “I want you to let me preach for you, let me teach for you, let me show you my study. I want to spend four months with you. Will you affirm in me or deny me whether or not I have been given this as a gift? I’m going to trust the body of Christ to affirm this. This is just not something I do because I want to do it. I want to find out if the body of Christ has really said yes, so I went to three different people—one in Scotland and two in the United States. I spent four months with each of them, and I preached in their churches, I preached in front of their elders. I showed them the disciplines of how I created sermons. Everything that I did and I said, “Now you tell me is this a gift to the church or not. If it’s not and you tell me it’s not, then I’m going say, I’m going to go back to work for the Fellowship of Christian Athletes.” It took me a whole year to discern that. It was a process of recognizing this—that the gift is for them. You have to give them the opportunity to recognize it because you do not determine your spiritual gift in a vacuum You just don’t wake up and say, “Oh I’d like to be up front teaching.” You see, it’s a gift to the body, and they’re the ones who’ve got to recognize it.

We need to be very careful about that. Just because you have a gift, does not necessarily mean the Lord’s going to let you use it, because you’ve got to have the right motive. Do I understand what that gift is for? It is not for me. It’s not for me; it’s for the church, for the body of Christ. You see, if you don’t have that right attitude...that’s why you have many people went, but few are sent. Heard that old expression? Many people went into the pulpit, but few are sent into the pulpit. You see, a lot of people say, “Oh, I can’t do anything else. I’m going to be a preacher.” That’s the attitude many people have.

I want to be sensitive to our sisters in Christ...I’ll let it go on. I’ve had so many women tell me, “I have the gift of preaching.” I said, “Terrific. That doesn’t mean God’s going to let you use it.” “Oh, I have a wonderful gift! I can preach.” I said, “Well, that doesn’t mean that God’s going to let you use it in the church.” “But I have this gift.” I said, “Who’s discerned that you have it?” “Well God just impressed upon me that I have this gift, and I need to go do it. I need to go teach men.” Attitude. Motive.

Audience Member: Bad.

Bad. You see...I don’t know your position. My position is I cannot support women’s eldership and women’s ordination. That’s my position. I cannot support that. That’s why I’m not an elder in my church because I cannot support that position. Now I do teaching in my church, but that church, I’m a member of, my wife’s church, they hold that position. I have said I am not qualified for eldership because I cannot support those two positions. That doesn’t mean that I can’t be used in ministry and teach in various situations like I am on Wednesday nights, but I know I cannot support that leadership mentality. So I cannot support women’s ordination and women’s eldership. I just don’t see that in the Scripture. Just because she has a gift doesn’t mean that God’s going to let her use it.

What’s the defining moment? Is a gift to the body based upon the definition of the body and the parameters of the body? Just not because somebody says I want to do it. She said, “But I’ve got so much

to give.” I said, “Then give it away to your kids.” “Oh, that’s degrading, you chauvinist.” I said, “Thank you. Thank you. Give it to your kids. You’ve got a lot to give away. Give it to your neighbors. Start a women’s Bible study.” “But I want to teach men because I’ve got to right to do that, because we’re all equal in the body of Christ. There’s no Jew nor Gentile. We’re all equal.” You see...I’m going to get myself in trouble, but... {LAUGHTER} ...I trust some of you guys will surround me when the [UNCLEAR]. {LAUGHTER}

Years ago, when I was in the Navy, I just got out of the Navy, one of the men who I held in great esteem was one of my flight instructors, who in my mind, was the epitome of every jet jockey that you wanted to be like. After he resigned from the Navy, I learned that he had become a homosexual. He had homosexual tendencies all during his career, which I never discerned at all. I would never have guessed that. I mean, he was the jet jockey of all jet jockeys. I later learned from his wife, she called me just in tears and said, “Bruce, I need you to tell you this, that he left me. He’s taken all of his income, and he’s given it to his male lover.” I was just shocked. She said, “Could you talk to him.” So I flew out to San Diego to talk to this friend, who was older than me. He retired from the Navy. With tears in my eyes, I pleaded with him, I begged with him, and I just did whatever I could. All he said is this, “That’s who God made me, and that’s who I need to be because my pastor says I need to live out who I am.”

He said, “You know, there was a meeting held in 1966.” Now I have no verification of this at all, other than what he told me. He said, “There was a meeting in 1966 of the gay and lesbian front, and they came up with one strategy to make homosexuality acceptable in American society.” Do you know what that strategy was? Get women in the pulpit. Their rationale was this. If we get women in the pulpit, homosexuality will become an accepted way of life, because they’re going to bring compassion, they’re going to bring mercy, they’re going to bring understanding. They had one goal, and I said, “That will never happen.” I said, “The church will never do that. The church, first of all, will not ordain women. They will not let that happen.” He said, “Mark my words. In 30 years, you’re going to be proved wrong.” He was the prophet and I was proved wrong. What has happened in the last 40 years? Ordaining homosexuals.

Do you realize that there’s one denomination who ordained a woman in Washington, DC, who denied the deity of Christ, but she would perform same sex marriages? They said, “We’re going to ordain you because you’ll perform same sex marriages. We don’t care about whether or not you believe Christ was sent by God the Father. You can deny the deity of Christ, but we’re going to ordain you to be a pastor of the church because you will perform same sex marriages.”

You see, guys, just because you have a gift, doesn’t necessarily mean the Lord’s going to let you use it. You’ve got to have the right motive. That’s what we’re going to talk about. It starts with our giving.

Please understand, positionally men and women are all equal in Christ Jesus. The church looks like this in its chain of command. Christ is the head of the church and everybody else is right here. There are distinctive roles and responsibilities of all those equal people, but positionally, we are all absolutely in Christ positionally and legally before him because being justification by faith alone, given credit for the sinless perfection and perfect obedience of Christ. Within that equality, there’s distinctiveness of roles and responsibilities.

When the church begins to move itself toward political correctness, what do we see the church doing? Where does revival need to occur, brothers? In the church. You see, the word “revive” implies life. When you pull somebody out of the water, who’s drowning, and you perform CPR, why are you doing that? Because you know that there’s some flicker of life here. You’re going to apply these techniques to increase the value of their life and the productivity of their life, so you’re going to perform CPR on them because you know there’s a little bit of life. We’re just going to try to give them more life. That’s what

revival is. Revival doesn't occur in the community. Revival occurs in the church. You see, the church has got a little bit of life, hopefully. Where does revival occur? We need to pray for revival in our denominations in our local churches, so that it will spread to the community. You don't go have a revival in the community. You have revival in the church. That's where it occurs, because there's hopefully some degree of life.

Brothers, the real issue here is what's our motive for why we do the things we do? I'm not saying it's easy. Sometimes your answer is going to be this, "I'm not doing too well, but I know Christ is doing fine." It's his righteousness, not mine. It's his righteousness. May God give us the grace to be brave men for the kingdom of God. Remember our battle cry is this, "Thy kingdom come." Thy kingdom come. That's our battle cry. At the Alamo, it was "Remember the Alamo!" In World War II, it was "Remember Pearl Harbor!" In Scotland, in its struggle for survival against England, it was "Wallace! Wallace! Wallace!" But in the kingdom of God, our war cry, our battle cry is this, "Thy kingdom come! Thy will be done, on earth just as it is in heaven." When you are praying that prayer, as we'll see when we go through the Lord's Prayer, you're asking God to do in your life, personally, what he has done in heaven, sovereignly. What he did before the foundation of the world, you're saying, "Take that which you did in heaven and make that a reality in me because I want your kingdom to be in me, so have your kingdom that's in heaven be in me." Thy Kingdom come! Guys, we need to be strong. It's not going to be easy. But hopefully we can say this, "I may not be doing too well, but Christ is doing fine."

Let's pray. Father, such powerful statements come out of your Word. It's so contrary to our human thought. Father, forgive us of our bad, ill-motivated intentions. Help us ask ourselves can I even congratulate myself for my doing anything, but it's really all of Christ. It's really his righteousness that we're putting on display, not our own. We can't add to that. Father, just refine us. Remold us. Revive us. That our motives would be consistent with you, and check us, Father, that our motives will be the means by which we will demonstrate the righteousness that is in Christ that is in us. Help us recognize, Father, that it's all about Christ and not about us. Remind us what has Jesus done. He's redeemed us. He's justified us by his grace. And may it be so for Jesus' glory this day, that we will live for Him. And all the Brave Men said...Amen!