

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

Taught by Bruce Bickel

Session: November 9, 2012

Gracious Heavenly Father, this is a day that we have never seen before, and one that we'll never see again. As you teach us in Ephesians, use our time wisely because the days are evil. Father, we pray that you would set our course for this day, that we'd be pleasing to you. We come to bask in the glory of your grace, and to revel in the joy of your teaching, and we pray, Lord, that you'd be pleased to open our eyes once again that we might behold you more clearly for Christ's sake. And may it be so for his glory. Amen.

Let's turn in your Bibles please to Matthew 6 as we continue looking at the Sermon on the Mount, the greatest sermon ever preached, recorded for us in Matthew 5, 6 and 7. We're in the passage today where we're looking at the impact about hypocrisy in our Christian life. After teaching about the character of the kingdom of God, the witness of the character of the kingdom of God, and the walk of a kingdom citizen in chapter 5, Jesus now moves into chapter 6 and begins to talk about different aspects of our worship and how we have to be careful that we don't have hypocritical worship, meaning that we do it to show, to get the approval of man. As he teaches in the four areas of our worship, where giving, praying, fasting and wealth, our wealth management, those are all tendencies because of the intricacies of the world's system to come in and have us be hypocritical in the way that we give, because we give for wrong glory as opposed to not letting the left hand know what the right hand does. The attitude and motive of our giving we examined in verses 2-4.

We saw praying in the Lord's Prayer, the Disciple's Prayer, in verses 5-15, how hypocritical we can be and should not be in our prayer life. Then we looked at fasting last week, just touched on it. The difficulty with hypocrisy in fasting is that what turns out to be a spiritual self-discipline can be prostituted into an occasion for pompous self-righteousness because we take on the aspect of fasting and saying, "Oh, aren't I spiritual?"

What we do, we need to understand that fasting is not necessarily giving up anything. Fasting, the purpose of it is not to give up something; it's to gain something. The gain that we get is our presence with the Lord. The reason that the Lord would lead you into a fast is not have you become self-righteous and say, "Oh, look what I sacrificed." It's really to draw you closer to himself.

The point of fasting is we have to be very critical about our own motives and why we fast. Do we do that to get an answer to a question? I know a lot of people say, "Well, I need to make a heavy decision. I'm going to fast." That may be a means of doing it. But you don't do that to get the answer. You do that to develop a closer relationship with the Lord, who will help you get the answer. That's the real issue of fasting. We have to be careful about our hypocrisy even in our fasting.

Today I want to touch on wealth. Now I did not send out the handouts. You don't have this in your notes, but Sig will send it out this week, so you will have it for the next couple of weeks, because we're going to be on this subject for a few weeks, and that is how we manage our wealth as an act of worship.

Let me just talk on the issue of hypocrisy for a moment just to review a couple of things with this. The difficulties with hypocrisy and the danger of hypocrisy is several fold. It can really rob us of our reality of Christian living. We substitute regulations for character. In other words, we start doing regulations and doing this and doing that thinking that's what makes us sharp, rather than looking at our character.

Hypocrisy also robs us of our spiritual rewards because we get our rewards strictly on this earthly system and not in heaven. As we see in Matthew 6, "Do not be like the Pharisees." They get all their

praise from men; they got exactly what they deserved. Hypocrisy will rob us of our heavenly rewards. Hypocrisy can also rob us of our spiritual influence. When reputation begins to be more important than God's glory, we begin to lose our impact.

Today I want us to take a look at a passage of Matthew 6:19-34. I'm going to read this to us, so please turn in your Bibles. We want to talk about in the next couple of weeks about how we worship by how we manage our wealth. Remember, there are four areas that Jesus is talking about where the danger of hypocrisy robs of these issues, and that would be in our giving, in our praying, in our fasting and in our wealth management.

Let's listen to the Lord's instruction on this as we understand...I'm just going to give you an overview of it today, and then in the future weeks we'll be more specific. Here is the Word of the Lord from Matthew 6:19-34, "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. 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, we are used to in our culture, as we take a look at wealth, we're used to separating things into certain categories. We sometimes say, "This is part of my spiritual life," or "this is part of my secular life," or "this is part of my spiritual life." But as you read that passage, there's no separation between that which is spiritual in our lives as a follower of Christ, and that which is material.

Jesus makes such a division, he makes it clear that those two things do not exist. Everything that we have, materially, is part of our spiritual management responsibilities. Many of the parables, he makes it very clear that a right attitude toward wealth is the mark of true spirituality. It's the right attitude that we have. Take a look at verses such as Luke 12:13 and Luke 16:1. Let me just take you to Luke 16. If we have the righteousness of Christ in our lives, then we will have a proper attitude toward our material wealth. That's the whole point. If we have the right attitude toward our material wealth, it will become as a result of our having the righteousness of Christ as the focus of our point.

Turn with me to Luke 16. Here is one of the real insightful descriptions of our understanding about our

having the right attitude. It is so practical. This is Luke 16:10-13, “¹⁰One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much. ¹¹If then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches?” You see the contrast? Basically saying this—if you can’t manage your unrighteous wealth, which are the material issues of life, if you can’t do that well, how is Lord going to trust you with the true things, which would be things of the kingdom? That’s why you begin to understand that part of the way that we manage our wealth as an experience of our Christian faith that really is a responsibility we have because how well we do that is going to be an indication of how much the Lord can entrust to you the true riches of the kingdom building. There’s a huge contrast there.

Let me read that again, “¹¹If then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches? ¹²And if you have not been faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own? ¹³No servant 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.” (Luke 16:11-13) There’s a repeat of that.

The issue here, folks, is this. Look at this practically. All of life is stewardship. The Scripture says that money doesn’t kill, ownership does. It’s thinking that it’s mine. You notice children playing on the playground? When somebody takes their little toy, what do they say? It’s mine! Where do they learn that? They learn it from us. They learn it from their parents. We have this mentality that says that’s mine. The child [UNCLEAR] says, “Well that’s mine!” Well we need to realize, as the Scripture is teaching us here in Luke 16, that if you and I cannot be faithful in the management of the things that God gives us materially...now we look at this spiritually, not materially...but he does give us material things. If we do not manage those things correctly, how can you think that God will give you the right to manage true riches, which would be the ministry of the kingdom of God building proposition?

You see, if you really want to be involved in Christian ministry significantly, one of the barometers that will be indicated that the Lord is going to manage is how well do you manage your money. How well do you manage your material things in life? That’s the unrighteous wealth that you have. If I’m going to give you the righteous things of the kingdom of God to operate and build my kingdom, I need to see that you’re faithful. If you can’t be faithful in these little things, such as your personal wealth, how can I trust you with the major things which are the kingdom building ministry operations?

You see, it’s a barometer. If you really want to be serious about being involved in ministry, then manage your wealth well, whatever you have. It’s not the issue of how much you have; it’s the attitude of how you have it. If you can’t manage it well, then don’t expect to be much involved in the ministry, because you can’t be trusted. You see, it’s a barometer.

I’ve told you this before, that when when Becky and I were dating and we realized we were going to get married, I basically walked her through Luke 16 and said, “Now as much as I love you, this is a deal breaker. If you don’t understand this, I’m going to manage our wealth because I take it seriously. We may not be able to do all the things that you think we want to do or should do or could do. I’m going to manage our wealth in way that we will not be in debt. Debt is not an option. So that means this—before you use your credit card, you go into our bank account and say do we have the money. If you do have the money, then use your credit card. But if you don’t have the money, don’t use the credit card or you double spend.”

Most people say, “I’m going to use the credit card because I don’t have the money.” That’s how we use the credit card. Do you realize that two years ago, Sears Company made more money off of the interest of their credit cards than they did retail sales? They made more money off the interest on their credit cards than they did retail sales. That’s because the American mindset says this, “I don’t have the money

in my bank account, in my checking account, therefore, I'm going to go into debt and use my credit card. We need to reverse that. We need to turn that around and say, "I have it in my checking, therefore, I'm going to use my credit card out of convenience. What I do at night is when I use the credit card, I pay the bill that night. I put in \$58.65 in my car for gas the other day. I went back that night and on Quicken paid it. When I get my credit card statement at the end of the month, it goes like this, "Thank you for your payment. Thank you for your payment. Thank you for your payment," the whole litany of things. The day that I use the credit card is the day that I spend it. If you don't do that, you're going to double spend. You're going to spend it twice.

You see, if you're not successful in managing the little things—gas is a little thing, it's a minutia, it's part of the unrighteous materialism of this world. Putting gas in my car. But it's an indicator to God how much responsibility he can entrust a person with the kingdom building process. You see, that's a powerful statement that he's teaching us in Luke 16. If you can't be trusted with the minimal stuff, who's going to trust you with the big stuff?

We're going to get into greater details about principles of financial management as we get into this, but this is just an overview today. I want you to understand the significance of that verse. As I talked with Becky, I said, "Becky, this is the deal breaker for us. If you can't understand this, then I'm not the guy you want to hook your wagon to." You see, for me, wealth management is a spiritual discipline. It is not a materialistic operation. It's a spiritual discipline because I just want the Lord to see, "Bruce, maybe I can just trust you a little bit, just trust you a little bit because you're demonstrating the fact that you're faithful in these small things. Maybe I can trust you with the bigger stuff. Maybe I can just trust you.

So you see, guys, this is anti-American because the great cancer in America is debt. That's the great cancer. It's debt. And yet we think that it's a right. We think that debt is a right. Debt is a violation of our responsibility. The Scripture says, "Owe no man nothing but love." You know, the borrower becomes the lender's slave.

We're going to get into this in greater detail. I'm just trying to give you the big picture of why this is so important that we understand in this Sermon on the Mount Jesus is saying, "Look, don't be hypocritical in the way that you manage your wealth." It's not about you. If you're a follower of Christ, it's really not about you; it's about the kingdom. You've got to be careful about how you manage the stuff of this world because that's a barometer of how much I know that I can trust you with you the good stuff, which is the things of this kingdom building process. Luke 16 is a powerful verse for us. We'll get into this in greater detail, how we work that out.

Nowhere did Jesus magnify poverty or criticize the legitimate getting of wealth. Never criticized that. He just criticized the way you manage whatever you have. The issue is not what you have; it's how you manage what you've been given, because you and I are stewards. A steward is the manager of somebody's else's resources. God has given us everything that we have. We don't own that; we are the stewards of everything that he has given us. Stewardship means I'm a manager of somebody's else's property. If I can't manage that property well, he will not give me more to manage. It's very logical.

Put it in terms of the operation of the system of this world. If you don't operate and manage your money well, you're not going to get more money to manage. Look at it in the banking business. If a person does a good job managing somebody's account, he's an investment officer, he's going to get more accounts to manage because he's done that well. It's the same thing here. If you haven't managed well the stuff you've been given as a steward, why should I give you more to manage?

It's really very logical. But it's also very spiritual because it's a spiritual discipline. We just need to be careful not to be hypocrites in the way that we manage our wealth, thinking that it's really something

that I'm gaining for myself. Nowhere does he ever really criticize or magnify poverty over wealth, legitimate getting of wealth.

There is the gift of giving. That means there has to be the process of getting. You see, sometimes people have the gift of giving. That means probably that they're going to have some skill of getting, so they have something to give. The question is do I understand that if I manage it, how to I give? That's why we talked about giving as our first illustration here in Matthew 6. You see, God has declared that all things he has made have been made for good. All the things that he gives us are good. We need to realize that. (Genesis 1:31) God knows that we need certain things in order to live. That's Matthew 6. We just read that.

In fact, he's given us richly all things to enjoy. Look at 1 Timothy 6:17. He's given us all these things, folks, for us to enjoy, not to hoard. Not to hoard, but to enjoy. There's a critical difference. We think collection is our attitude. Really, it's management should be the priority. Enjoy the things that God gives you. Thank him for them.

I just had a dear friend who, through the Servant's Fund, we sent a gift. He called me on the phone or sent me a note and said, "You know who sent me this money? Can I write them a thank you note?" I said, "No. The whole concept of the Servant's Fund is this. We don't tell you who gives you the gift because the only person we want you to thank is to thank the Lord because that's where it came from." You see, just thank the Lord. He said, "I'll just do that." You see, that's the attitude. God gives us these things to enjoy, but we should not enjoy that, that we cannot make them idols. Idolatry is trusting someone or something to give you only what God can give you.

How often are we trusting our 401k? All I've heard since the election is over, "Oh, I'm going to be taxed more." Well, that may happen. But are we really trusting someone who's going to make a decision of how much they take from my income and my taxes or not? Of course not. You see, we've got to make sure that we don't make taxes an idol or make our 401k an idol. Idolatry is trusting someone or something to give you only what can give you.

***Don:** Could you expand on that a little bit more, Bruce? The line between enjoying something and idolatry?*

That's a good question, Don. You and I can enjoy something because we know the source of the giver. There's the difference. When you realize that it has come from God and you enjoy it because you recognize it's a gift that he's given to you. With that gift comes a responsibility to manage it. The joy comes because we are the recipient from the giver. All good things...look at 1 Timothy. Somebody look that up—1 Timothy 6:17. All good things comes from God, so we need to realize whatever I have is good, therefore, I celebrate and I enjoy the fact that I'm the recipient from the giver. It's an expression of God's love.

As we were talking about in Romans the other night, the motivation for obedience is not the law. The motivation for obedience is love. Love is the motivation for obedience, not the law. We're not under law anymore; we're under grace. We're no longer condemned. There's no condemnation. So what's your motivation for obedience? It's not the law to say, "Oh, I'm going to earn some merit because I've done these ten things." It's the realization that God has given me something I could never obtain myself, and that's salvation in the person and work of Christ. My expression of gratitude is a love response in obedience. It's motivated by my love for God.

The believer looks at sin differently than we did before. We don't look at sin in terms of the law. We look at sin in terms of the love. It's not a law issue; it's a love issue, because it's this, "Father, forgive

me. I just violated your love for me because of the choice that I made. Father, I want to please you. Would you help me, give me the grace so that I will please you what the decisions I make because I want to express my love for you?" Jesus says in John 14, "If you love me, you will obey me."

Part of the enjoyment is the realization that the source is that God's expressing his love to you by giving you these things, these good things, whatever they may be. You and I can enjoy them. The difficulty is when that enjoyment factor goes beyond the giver and we become a getter, and we begin to think that I have a right to this. You see, when I begin to think that I have a right to this is when it becomes an idol. That's when you begin to focus of the getting of it rather than to giver who gave it to you.

You see, gratitude is an expression of love to the giver. Idolatry is when I become so focused on the getting, and forget the giver, that I begin to trust it to give me the things that only the giver can give me. Does a larger 401k really give you peace? If it does, it's an idol. Does a better car give you more confidence? If it does, it's an idol.

Tom: I think, also, there's a big difference between we don't understand the difference between joy and happiness. A big return on my 401k makes me happy. The joy is produced by the spirit. That can only be when you give out of your heart.

Amen. Happiness is a result of happenings. Joy is a result of grace. You see, there's a difference. Let me give you another illustration. I've done this, and I can only give you examples from my own life, so I know I bore you because I repetitiously give them, but I've only got one life to model. {LAUGHTER} A good thing, for me, years ago, was that I just wanted to be a dad. That's a good thing. Fatherhood is a good thing. I had a terrific father. All I ever wanted to do in my life, guys, was to be a dad, just like my dad was a dad. That is a good thing. I mean, fatherhood is a great, great desire. It's a good thing. God gives that to you as a gift. He gives us as men the gift of fatherhood. What a great joy that is. But that good thing I turned into an idol. That good thing I turned into an idol because for about 20 years, I kept saying to myself, "If I could just be a dad, I'll be fulfilled. I'll be fulfilled. Everything in my life will be complete." What did I do? I was trusting a thing, fatherhood, to give me only me only what God can give you. God is the only one who can fulfill your life, to make it sensible, to give you that joy that's beyond circumstances, the peace that passes all understanding.

You see, first of all, you have to have peace with God before you have the peace of God. You've got to have peace with God before you have peace of God. Peace of God is a consequence of peace with God. Often times in our evangelism, we offer the benefits of salvation, but don't offer the Savior, "Would you like to have peace of God?" and they say, "Oh yeah." "Well then here's what you do. Invite Jesus into your life. Now you've got the peace of God." You see, we've emphasized the benefit. Peace of God is a consequence. It's a consequence of peace with God. That means you've got to understand justification by faith alone before you get the peace of God.

What I did, for about 15 years, I really just kept saying, "Lord, if I could just be a dad." That's an idol. It's an idol. I turned it into an idol. It wasn't until, guys, that I realized that I had taken something that was so good and I turned it into something that was so wrong because I made it an idol. It wasn't until I said, "Lord, forgive me of my idolatry. I am an idolater. I have made fatherhood an idol." It wasn't until I gave that up, I had to die to that, and I said, "Father, my attitude for the past 15 years has been sinful because I am trusting a happening to give me only what you can do through your grace and through your Holy Spirit. Would you forgive me for my sinfulness for the past 15 years of desiring to be a dad at such a level that I made it an idol, and Father, will you forgive me of my idolatry." It wasn't till I did that, many years ago, that that burden of my wanting to be a dad was lifted.

The Lord has seen fit not to let me have natural children. I don't have any natural children. For reasons

only known to him, he said, “Thanks but no thanks.” Perhaps one of the reasons, I don’t know his mind, as we’re told that his mind is not like ours and his thoughts are not like ours, so I don’t try to figure him out and ask myself the question why. I just say, “Lord, thank you for revealing the fact that I’m a sinful idol, that I’m an idolater, and I confess that.” So there’s a real fine line, brothers, between taking something that good that God gives you, and taking that to the point of making it an idol and thinking that if I could just have this thing or have more of this one thing, then I’m going to get the real benefits of the joy of life.

***Ted:** Bruce, how did you actually experience what you just described? I mean, existentially, how did that hit you? You’re going along for 15 years, you know, my life will really be happy and satisfied if I’m a father. Something hits you, though. How did that actually take place?*

Well, it was just through the Scripture. I was just studying the Scripture, preparing some messages, studying the Scripture, and I began to look at idolatry. I began to study idolatry. I began to realize one of the things that triggered my thought was you can’t serve two masters. Did I make fatherhood a master? Something I took that was good. It was gaining mastery over my life, because that’s all I really wanted to do. I became envious of other guys who had children. I started living my life vicariously through my brother and his two children. I did everything I could to enjoy them and my brother was very, very gracious to me to let me enjoy his two children. I’m very, very close to them now. But I began to live through them. I began to realize over a period of time, primarily just the Scripture caught me in the head when I just realized this is an idol. Then I started thinking, “Lord, what am I going to do about what I just learned about idolatry?”

I just began to look at myself and said, “You know, I’ve got some idols.” Reputation can be an idol. The world’s perception of you can be an idol. You see, idolatry is so, so slick and so sly and so devious. You take something that is good, whatever that may be, and you take it to its extreme, and you begin to take your mind off of the gift and the giver and put it on the getter, which is me, and you just want more. You begin to look for more things that will give you only what God can give you.

I know people who have made marriage an idol because they’re saying, “If I could just get married, I’ll be fulfilled.” You know how it is in the Christian world. I mean, I was single for many years. People always used to say to me, “When are you going to become complete?” {LAUGHTER} I said, “What?” “Well, when are you going to become complete? You’re incomplete because you don’t have a mate.” How many times do we say that to young ladies? When are you going to become complete? The Scripture says, in Colossians 2:10, you’re complete in Christ. All of a sudden, all these people want to introduce me to somebody. {LAUGHTER}

***Ted:** He said now you tell me. {LAUGHTER}*

Yeah. But I mean, look at the pressure we put on single Christians. You can now go on the web and you’ve got Christian dating. Go on and fill out a portfolio and they’ll match you. It’s almost like, you know, we’ve made marriage an idol. Your completeness comes in your relationship to Christ, not in the relationship with your wife. Do you know what a Christian marriage is? It’s simply this—two complete people coming together helping each other enjoy their completeness. It’s all it is. I’m complete, she’s complete. I’m going to help her enjoy her completeness in Christ. I can’t do that. I’m not going to complete her of anything, let alone she’s not going to complete me of anything. You see, your completeness means your totality of your humanity is all wrapped up in Christ, and you’re complete in that. You’ve been given all the things that you need. You just help her enjoy that. And she’ll help you enjoy that. You see, that’s a Christian marriage. It has nothing to do with being complete when you find a mate.

You see, we've turned, even in the Christian realm, we've turned marriage into an idol. We're saying if you could just have this, then you're going to be complete.

Bill: *I guess [UNCLEAR], Bruce, it's interesting, [UNCLEAR] carrying around a Bible that I had [UNCLEAR]...*

There's nothing new under the sun, is there? {LAUGHTER}

Bill: *The problem is, I'm not [UNCLEAR] than I was then, which is really [UNCLEAR], but I'll use that illustration you had with regard to Christian [UNCLEAR], but it's applicable to a number of different things that we find in our walk as believers. [UNCLEAR]...and that's true, but that's the fine line. I struggle with that all the time. Clearly the illustration did you covet a relationship with a person for marriage to the point where you need to be complete, you see that. But the point is gradation below that. At what point is it appropriate for someone to sit there and say, "I would desire to have a relationship with someone," or "I would desire to have a car that doesn't break down," or "I would desire..." What point is the gradations of that? Or, "I would like to go on a vacation sometime next year," as opposed to I deserve a vacation or...gradation differentiation there that I have a problem with because my mind is a very rational [UNCLEAR] type. I can rationalize anything to make it legitimate even though it's a [UNCLEAR], I guess. That's the struggle I have with it. How many times do we just, we miss that because we're bad, and other times we beat ourselves up senselessly for something that isn't really there. I don't have that worked out.*

Good. Neither do I. {LAUGHTER} All I can say is this. We've been justified by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you have peace with God. Now the link between chapter 5:1, the link is chapter 8:1, "Therefore, there is no condemnation for those of us who are in Christ." That's the bridge. Chapter 6 and 7 are not a greater explanation of justification, or sanctification. He's really dealing with the objections to the doctrine of justification. He's not explaining it more. He's saying in chapter 6, he says, "This is your union with Christ, and let me tell you what Christ can do when you're unified with him and you're no longer in Adam, you're in Christ." Chapter 7 says, "This is what the law can't do." Chapter 6 says, "This is what Christ can do." Chapter 7, "This is what the law can't do." The bridge is chapter 5:1 and chapter 8:1. All I can say, Bill, is this. I don't know how to resolve all that. But I do know this; there's no condemnation for those of us in Christ Jesus. That's part of our struggle. That's part of our life in Christ. That's part of our responsibility is to work out those gradations, just as we can, one by one.

There's nothing wrong with wanting to go on a vacation. You see, those are the good things. We need to look at all the good things. Is a vacation a good thing? Yes. God gives us vacations. All those things are good. I don't know how to work out all the gradations of all that. My point is this—just be careful as you're working out through those steps that you don't it to the final step of idolatry. In the meantime, you've just got to back up and just take it a day at a time. I think we're going to get into that more, and he says don't make it any more anxious than it is. Today has enough anxious items in itself. Don't create more.

My point is this. I'm not giving you an out by saying we can be licentious. I'm not saying that. We need to understand this. We're not under condemnation anymore. We're just not. That's because we have peace with God.

Ted: *There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*

Amen.

Ted: But there is condemnation for those who are led by Jesus, or with Jesus. This in Jesus is the all important preposition. Because otherwise, it's me trying to follow his example.

Yeah, we're not following Christ's example. He produces...read the rest of Romans 8. Maybe we ought to do a study of Romans sometime. {LAUGHTER} We'll have Bishop Rogers do that.

Bishop Rogers: No thanks. I'm happy to listen.

Romans 8 talks about the spirit within us, if the spirit of God is in you. You see, that's the definition. You've got to read the rest of those verses in chapter 8. He defines what it means to have the spirit of God in you. That's the difference. So I'm not following Christ's model, the Holy Spirit is working in me to do that to produce that in me. That's what means to have Christ in you. That's why, quite honestly, we need to be careful when we tell our children, "Where does Jesus live? He lives in your heart." No, he doesn't. Where is Jesus? He's at the right hand of the Father. Who's in you? It's the spirit of Christ that's in you.

Years ago, under my first church in Kansas, I was making a statement, teaching a youth message. You get the kids up front before the real thing. You give them a watered-down version of the real thing. {LAUGHTER} I was talking about invite Jesus into your heart. A little girl came up to me after and said, "Pastor Bruce, if Jesus is in my heart, he can't be with my brother when he goes to visit my Aunt in New York." {LAUGHTER} I said, "What?" She said, "If Jesus is in my heart, he can't be with my brother when he goes to visit my Aunt in New York." I thought, "I'm supposed to teach her?" {LAUGHTER} She's right. Jesus is not in your heart. It is the spirit of Christ that's in your heart. That's what it means to be in Christ. You're no longer in Adam; you are in Christ. That's why Paul uses that phrase 129 times in the New Testament to describe a person who has a saving relationship to God the Father, through God the Son, as you're in Christ. He doesn't you're a Christian. He says you're in Christ. That means the spirit of God is in you. And where is Christ? Romans 8:34 says he's at right hand of God interceding for us.

The whole issue is we belittle the current work of the Lord Jesus Christ in his intercessory work on our behalf right now because we've taught people, "Jesus is in your heart." You got the idea that I'm carrying around Jesus in my heart. No, he's at the right hand defending me. I'm glad he's up there, not down here in me. I'm in him. That means the spirit of Christ is in me. There's a huge difference. Huge difference. Romans 8 basically says this, "We're no longer condemned," for those of us who are in Christ Jesus. We're in him, and it's his strength that causes it to happen. It's not our strength. Huge difference.

Bill: Isn't one of the Holy Spirit's job description is to convict the world of sin? I think we're in the world. Doesn't he convict us of sin when we get off [UNCLEAR] idolatry [UNCLEAR]...?

That's what happened to me, in the whole issue of fatherhood. It was the Holy Spirit, as I was reading the Scripture, studying the Scripture in my normalcy of life. The Holy Spirit was pleased to fulfill his job description, that was to convict me of the sin of idolatry. I had to repent of that. It was painful thing to do, because I had to give up something I felt so good about, "Boy, I really have my focus on the Lord because I just want to be a dad. Isn't that wonderful, Bruce? You're such a great guy. You'll be a great father one of these days because you really want to do that." I had turned that thing into something that was an idol. It was really hard for me to give it up. It was difficult, because for 15 years, I had basked in that. I had held on to that. It was in my hip pocket. It was every thought I had. Every time I saw a dad with a son, that was me, just thinking, "I could teach this kid to be the next Oliver Luck or the next quarterback. You know, I could...look what I can do. I can teach him all these things." It was really hard to give that up. It wasn't until I came to grips with that and said, "It's sin," when I called it what it was,

is when I began to realize, “I’ve got to give it up.” It wasn’t because of the law. It was because of love. Father, how can I hold on to this much longer, any longer, when I realize how much you love me?

Capital punishment. If you don’t believe in capital punishment, you don’t believe in the cross. The cross is capital punishment. Somebody paid for my sins. And I said, “Lord, you loved me enough to do that? I’ve got to get rid of this. Will your Holy Spirit convict me, convince me and comfort me as I die to it. Die to something that is part of my life.” It wasn’t until I did that, that I began to realize I was set free from that. Now I enjoy working with our kids, but I don’t have the desire to be a dad because I see all the problems you’re going through and I’ve been protected. {LAUGHTER} I don’t mean to be facetious about that. All I’m trying to give you is an illustration of what Don is saying, you can enjoy something for so much, but you’ve got to be careful not to take it to the far end. Bill’s point is great. You’ve got to work out through those gradations. They go step by step by step. You’ve got to deal with it [UNCLEAR].

But realize this. All the good things of life come from God. How is that we manage it? That includes all the material things of our life. That’s what we’re talking about the next couple of weeks. Let’s pray and ask the Lord to be with us. We’re going to have some interesting times as we talk about how faithful are we in managing the unrighteous things of this world as the barometer of how much God can really trust us what the true righteousness of building the kingdom. That’s the issue at hand. That’s Luke 16.

Let’s pray. Father, it’s uncomfortable to be convicted because a part of us dies at that time, and we just don’t like to do that, because we think we have a right to our thoughts. We think we have a right to our desires. We need to realize, Father, that those desires you give us are from you, and that’s why we need to recognize are they really from you or are they from me. Is it my idea, or is it something that your Holy Spirit is prompting me to do? Help us realize, Father, that we don’t need to initiate things; we just need to be aggressive responders to what we see the Holy Spirit doing. And may we be reminded of His role, which is to guide us into all truth. Father, we know that it is the truth that sets us free; free from ourselves as much as anything else, and our own perceptions of what we think we need. So father, we just humbly pray that you would forgive us of all our idolatry, those things that we take, that we trust someone or something, something that is so good and we superimpose upon it expectations of happiness that we’ll get if we just had it. Father, help us confess our idolatry because we desire to really manage the things of this world that you give us as a barometer of how much you can really entrust us with the kingdom things. And may it be so for Jesus’ sake. And all the Brave Men said...Amen!!