

Part 2 "The Work of God and the Trembling of Man"

Holiness

Philippians 2:12-13

The Rev. Ted Wood

October 30, 2015

Ted: The Lord be with you.

Men: And also with you.

Ted: Let us pray. Lord God, You have done a mighty work in our lives and in the lives of the whole church through the regeneration and the sanctification by the work of Your Son Jesus, who took us with Him into the grave, out of the grave, and to be seated at Your right hand. This is a great mystery and a miracle and we praise You for it and pray that by the apprehension of the truth we may live into it. And we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Men: Amen.

Ted: I did the prayer first because I wanted us to sing this morning. How many of you all are morning people? Raise your hand. (*Laughter.*) How many people are not morning people? Okay, sorry. You're going to have to sing this morning. (*Laughter.*)

The great Charles Wesley wrote this hymn in 1738, a few months after his conversion. He wrote this hymn. Look at the content of this hymn. He wrote it a few months after his conversion in 1738. It's one of the best descriptions of the salvation experience and eternal life that's promised us in Christ. I'm going to turn your attention to this and we're going to sing along in a moment.

If you don't have one of those handouts—there's a dearth of handouts Sig; this is not good. There's a dearth of handouts. Can you share them, please? If you've got one, fellows, here in the front, none of them?

Sig: I've got one. This is the last one on the earth.

Ted: Let me look at these four verses with you. Then we're going to sing it because it's going to have to do with some of what I'm going to be talking about this morning.

The first verse:

"And can it be that I should gain An interest in the Savior's blood?"

What is he talking about? "And can it be?" Is it possible? Is it possible that I could actually come under the saving blood of Jesus? Is that possible? You see, it's interesting that today we just assume that it's readily available. Charles Wesley was amazed that it was available to him!

"And can it be that I should gain An interest in the Savior's blood?"

And then in the next verse he says,

"'tis mercy all, immense and free, For O, my God, it found out me."

That mercy of God went and looked for Charles Wesley and found him and saved him, like the shepherd going after the lost sheep.

The third verse is actually my favorite because I think that it explains and describes the conversion experience—what happens when you're converted. And it kind of speaks back to the imprisonment of Peter and how the angel came into his cell when he was in prison and set him free and loosed his bonds. And that verse goes:

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"Long my imprisoned spirit lay, Fast bound in sin and nature's night."

"Thine," referring to God, Thine eye diffused a quickening ray.

I woke; the dungeon flamed with light. My chains fell off. My heart was free.

I rose, went forth and followed Thee."

I'm just thinking about that verse. I'm just wondering at all those lines in that verse. How much of the activity was Charles' activity? How much did he actually do? He was bound in chains. He was bound in sin and nature's night. God looked into that prison that Charles was in. It wasn't a physical prison. It was a spiritual prison.

"The dungeon flamed with light. My chains fell off." Charles didn't take off his chains. It was God who took his chains off. "My heart was free." God freed his heart. Charles didn't free his heart.

"I rose, went forth, and followed Thee." Well, that's what Charles did. He rose, went forth and followed Him.

So I'm going to do this. Why don't I have Lou and Don play the tune once. And then we'll all stand and sing all four verses. It's a rousing hymn. Did I hear anybody groan? (*Laughter.*) To the praise of God Almighty we're groaning? Ah, brothers, that's not a good sign. (*Laughter.*) Don, go ahead. Play the one verse and then we'll sing. (*The verse is played.*)

Ted: Don, wait just a second. Okay. Everybody please stand and let's sing along.

1. And can it be that I should gain An interest in the Savior's blood?

Died He for me, who caused His pain, For me, who Him to death pursued?

Amazing love! How can it be That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?

Amazing love! How can it be That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?

2. He left His Father's throne above, So free, so infinite His grace. Emptied Himself of all but love, And bled for Adam's helpless race. 'tis mercy all, immense and free, For O, my God, it found out me! 'tis mercy all, immense and free, For O, my God, it found out me!

3. Long my imprisoned spirit lay, Fast bound in sin and nature's night.

Thine eye diffused a quickening ray. I woke; the dungeon blazed with light.

My chains fell off. My heart was free. I rose, went forth, and followed Thee.

My chains fell off. My heart was free. I rose, went forth, and followed Thee.

4. No condemnation now I dread. Jesus and all in Him is mine.

Alive in Him, my living Head, And clothed in righteousness divine.

Bold I approach the eternal throne, And claim the crown through Christ my own.

Amazing love! How can it be That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me!

Ted: Thank you. You may be seated.

Participant: Did he do the music also?

Ted: No, the music was done about ninety years later. Well, it's a great hymn, and it's a great hymn worth meditating on. Charles Wesley wrote six thousand hymns. Many consider that his greatest hymn. And it was written, as I said, within a few months of his

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conversion, which is absolutely extraordinary. He was converted first. His brother John Wesley was converted three days later.

And both of them had been very active in the church. In fact, both of them had been Church of England pastors. But he did not know the personal and warm relationship with Jesus Christ, which he had after he had failed in his ministry.

Going on to the second part of the talk, in our talk which is "The Work of God and the Trembling of Man," part two is "The Trembling of Man." And I'm going to give a review of what I covered last week because one leads right into the other. The whole subject area is the question of God's sovereignty and man's responsibility.

I'm going to go back to the key verse I'm using there, which is found in Philippians the second chapter. And it says, "*My beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence, but much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you both to will and to work His good pleasure.*"

So the question is how to make sense of these two verses and the relationship between God's sovereignty and man's responsibility. The question is, are they equal parts? And I think that often it's presented as equal parts—both/and.

But I think it all depends on where you start. And the point I've made in the past is that so much of our teaching today starts with man's needs and ends with God's character, when really it should start the other way around. The whole understanding of who we are in the universe and how it's put together, our place in that and who God is and who we are begins with who God is. And everything else follows from that.

I think that getting this all right and putting it into proper perspective is helped by the fact that those two verses, which are "*work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you*"—the Greek word *for* is the word *gar*. And it has the sense of "for the fact is," or another time it's translated "verily." So what is the fact in these two verses? The fact is that God works in you "*both to will and to do His good pleasure.*" That's the foundational fact. Therefore you can go and "*work out your salvation with fear and trembling*, as I think I put it here. Because God works in you both to will and to work His good pleasure, therefore you work out your salvation with fear and trembling. My working out my salvation with fear and trembling is all the result of God's working foundationally in the beginning. Don, I've just started and you're already asking me a question. Golly! (*Laughter.*) Go ahead.

Don: Why then is it the reverse in our English translations? I mean, if that's the way it should be—

Ted: It's because it's the way it appears in the Greek. But I'm just saying that the word *for* establishes the issue of why something is the case, because, as I've said, Strong's Concordance also says that it can mean "for the fact is." So what is the fact? That's what I'm trying to get at.

Don: Okay.

Ted: What is the foundational fact of that? So let's start with God and His character. Bishop Rodgers was good enough to point out that God as Creator is not a characteristic or attribute of God, but it is certainly one of His primary works because we get that as the

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first verse in the Bible, don't we? "*In the beginning God created . . .*" So that is what God does from the very beginning.

And we see this also in the verse "*All things were made through Him*"—he's talking about Jesus—"*and without Him was not anything made that was made. In Him was life, and that life was the light of men.*" And it says that not only in John the first chapter, the third verse, but also in Colossians 1:16.

Transcriber's Note: Colossians 1:16. "*For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him.*"

Ted: I covered this in greater depth last week. So part of that creation of God, the fact that that's the first thing God does is that He starts creating. And one of the greatest creations, if not the greatest creation that we know of, is the new creation. That's who He has made us in Christ. We are His greatest creation. "*If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.*" That's a tremendous verse, and it is really the foundation of who we are.

So how did God create in us the new creation? How did He deliver me from darkness to light? How did He save me?

Well, it's not by making me a better person. And so much of the Christian message comes across as "God is in the business of And so that's why we need a new birth. We need to be born again, because the first birth created in us is an old creation, an old creation that's dying. It can be greatly improved. People can make huge sacrifices. Parents give their lives for their children. But in essence, unless they've been born again, they are still part of the old creation or the old Adam.

So you must be born again. It's an absolute necessity for everyone to be born again if they are to see the kingdom of God. In John 3:7 Jesus said, "*Do not marvel that I say to you, 'You must be born again.'*"

making us better old persons." That God is in the business of making us new persons, whether we're actually better or not, is another issue. There are many pagans that I know who are actually better people than I am. They are more moral, more dependable, more consistent, and any of the other qualities. But the one thing they are not, they are not new. It's just the better old you.

I mean, I've come more and more to find that this is so foundational. And as I shared last week, I was very impressed with George Whitfield and his preaching. This was central to all his preaching during the Great Awakening. He kept on emphasizing to people, "You must be born again." No matter what else happens, you must be born again. You can improve your life. You can have more joy, more prosperity. You can have greater health. You can have deliverance from bad habits. You can have deliverance from disease and sickness. But unless you're born again, you will not see the kingdom of God. Man is in so much darkness that he cannot see the Kingdom, much less enter it. So before you can enter it, you must see it. And that's why Jesus said in the third chapter, "*Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you are born again, you cannot see the kingdom of God.*"

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And how does that birthing take place? It tells us in 1 Peter. "*You have been born again through the living and abiding word of God.*" *The word of God is living and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword. It pierces through body and spirit.*"

And that is why, from the very beginning, that the message of the gospel has been brought as a result of the preaching of the gospel. People must hear the Word. The Word has a supernatural power to change your life.

Participant: Amen.

Ted: We know this because from the very beginning, when God was faced with the darkness in the creation, He said in words, ""*Let there be light.*" Every one of His early creations—the six creations, I believe—are all based on the word of God. He says it and it happens.

When God says, "*Come to Me, all ye that travail and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest,*"—that by itself draws people to Him.

So the absolute importance and the centrality of the preaching of the word of God in a way that people can understand it, in their languages. One of the key focuses and factors of the Protestant Reformation, the reason that the Reformers wanted to see the church reform was not that they were trying to create a new church. They were trying to reform the old church. And that reformation was based on the preaching of the word of God. Martin Luther started to preach the word of God in the pulpits of Germany and the country was electrified. It was turned upside down. It marked the shift from the medieval world to the modern world.

George Whitfield, the Wesley brothers, William Tenet and many others during the eighteenth century preached the word of God, and the whole country was changed.

We've done some ancestry research with my wife's people. They lived in the north of England, as coal miners in the north of England. And Wesley records in his journal that he visited their town and their coal mines and preached as the minors came out of the hole in the ground. So at either shift, in the morning shift and at the evening shift—whatever shift those minors were on—as they came out of the mine, Wesley was preaching to them as they came out of the mine. He preached five to six times a day! One of the reasons that they say that England did not go through the French Revolution is because of the preaching of the Wesley's and of Whitfield, because lives were changed. People were born again and they had a new life. And they did not require the beheading of monarchs and nobility to do it.

So the abiding word is the thing that causes us to be born again. And what is the extent of the new creation? Well, it's three parts of time—in the past we were elected and justified and I was saved. And Bruce has talked about this. In the present I'm being saved in sanctification. And in the future I will be saved through glorification.

It's actually inaccurate to say that I'm saved completely now because the body I have is deteriorating. My body is going into the grave. More things are going wrong. Gravity is getting the better part of me. Little odds and ends begin to fall off. And this is part of my dying. I need a glorified body. I need a totally saved body. And I look forward to that. That's why the ultimate goal is not heaven, where we don't have bodies, but the new heaven and the new earth where we do have bodies.

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Participant: Amen.

Ted: So I look forward to that. To me, heaven is just part of the way there. I think that when preachers stop at glorification as being in heaven, I don't think that's the complete story.

So what is the extent of the new creation? Past, present and future. What is the purpose of the new creation? Well, it's the will of God. It tells us that in 1 Thessalonians. God chose us as His first-fruits to be saved through sanctification. We are the evidence of God's grace. We're the first-fruits. The first thing that God displays is through our sanctification.

And then how am I sanctified? Basically, how is God creating me now, in the present? He created a new life through election and justification. And He will, at the end of time, glorify me. That is His creation in me and I will be saved. But what's going on right now?

And we look to some of the verses we looked at last week. "*I am sure of this, that He who began a good work in you*"—He began a good work in you through election and justification; you experienced it as conversion—"*He that began a good work in you*"—in election and justification—"*will complete it at the day of Jesus Christ.*" That's glorification. "*He will bring it to completion*" is what we're going through right now.

Regeneration leads to sanctification. And I shared last week that great verse in Ephesians. "*For by grace you are saved through faith, and this is not your own doing. It is the gift of God, not the result of works, so that no one can boast.*" We all know that verse. But after that experience of salvation, after that regeneration, after the new birth, where do the good works fit in? Well, it tells us in the very next verse. "*For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.*"

So along with our election in time past, in time past God also prepared good works for us to walk in—the thing that we're called to today.

Now here—and I shared this with you last week—these are some of the eight hundred New Testament good works, and I pulled them out of 1 Thessalonians.

And Paul says, "*We urge you, brothers, admonish the idle. Encourage the fainthearted. Help the weak. Be patient with them all. See that no one repays evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone. Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies. But test everything. Hold fast to what is good. Abstain from every form of evil.*"

I said that those were nineteen commandments in nine verses—something like that. I can't remember the exact number. But these are all the things, the good works, that God has predestined us to walk into.

But the question is how is it going to be done? So Paul tells us in the next verse. "*Now may the God of peace . . .*" In essence, he's praying. He's saying, "*May the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus. He who calls you is faithful.*" The call of conversion. But now the call for good works. Come, do these things.

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"He who calls you is faithful." You will surely do it. No, that's not what it says, is it? "I've called you from death to life, out of darkness into light. I've called you to the new life in Christ." By work. He did that. "And now I've got other things for you to do. I predestined you in the beginning of time for salvation. Now I've predestined you for good works."

How are you going to do those? I'm listing them here for you. These are just nine of the eight hundred New Testament commandments. I'm listing these. Now how is this going to be done? "God, who calls you, is faithful. He will surely do it."

"He will surely do it." Not "He might do it," or "He could do it." "He will surely do it." That ought to give you tremendous confidence and hope.

It goes on. In Hebrews, "May the God of peace equip you . . ." Here's another prayer. "May the God of peace equip you with everything good, that you may do His will." This is the same kind of idea—do everything good—"equip you for good works, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

It's interesting what it doesn't say. Paul is praying "that God may equip you for every good work, that you may do His will," that you may work hard to please Him. You know, it says, "working in us that which is pleasing in His sight."

And I love this verse in Hebrews. It's such a capsulation in Hebrews 12. "Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us." There's another commandment. Brothers, run the race that God has set before you. God has set a race track before you. It was the race track given to you from before the foundation of the world. He set this before you. Now run it.

How am I going to do that? "Looking to Jesus, the Author." Oh, I know that Jesus authored my faith. I know He started it. He got it going. He saved me. "The Author and the" what?

Participant: The Perfecter.

Ted: "The Finisher, the Perfecter of our faith." Did you have anything to do with authoring your faith?

Participant: No.

Ted: Do you have anything to do with perfecting your faith? That's the question. Yes, Tom?

Tom: But doesn't Peter also tell us that it's not just being satisfied with milk, but desiring heavier things?

Ted: Excellent, excellent! And desire is a key factor there, yes. And I'm going to talk about that because I've said before that desire is the first gift that God gives someone at conversion. Excellent! Isn't it wonderful that he said that? Desiring, not just doing.

Okay. So "the Author and Perfecter." Perfecter. We get that same word when Jesus dies on the cross. The word *totelostai* in Greek. It comes from the word *telos*, the end. And it means three things in Greek. It means "mature, finish, or complete."

So that is what God is doing. He is maturing your faith.

By grace, by the grace of God. Now I'm on to 1 Corinthians. "By the grace of God I am what I am. And His grace toward me was not in vain."

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Isn't that interesting? Paul can say, "Hey! You can criticize me, but by the grace of God I am what I am."

Well, Paul, aren't you responsible for something of who you are? Aren't you making yourself? He doesn't fall back on that. He says, "*By the grace of God I am what I am.*" It's a very bold statement. "*By the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain.*"

"Hey! God gave me grace, but I did a lot of good stuff to help Him out. On the contrary, I worked harder than all of the rest of those great apostles you guys are talking about."

Wait a second. "*Though it was not I.*" That was an extraordinary statement.

Participant: Amen.

Ted: "*It was not I, but the grace of God that was with me.*"

So in summary, the God who began a good work in you will complete it. Philippians 1. Pray that God will sanctify you. He will surely do it. 1 Thessalonians 5. Jesus is the Perfecter, the Finisher, the Completer, the Maturer of your faith. Hebrews 12. I worked harder, yet not I, but the grace of God.

Participant: Then why does he first—

Ted: Wait a second, Don. I'm not finished with my list. (*Laughter.*) 1 Corinthians.

And we go back to that verse that Bruce has talked about so often in the past—Ezekiel 36:26-27. This is God's promise. "*I will give you a new heart and a new spirit.*" He's not improving the old heart and the old spirit. "*I will give you a new heart and a new spirit. And I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you.*" The Hebrew word there is "to make something happen." "*I will put My Spirit within you and I will cause you to walk in My statutes, and be careful to obey My laws.*" "I will cause you to walk in My statutes and laws."

Participant: Amen.

Ted: What a promise that is! Okay now, Don?

Don: Okay. Why does he have that little proviso in the beginning, where he did say, "*But I labored more abundantly than they all.*" Why doesn't he just skip that? "*His grace toward me was not in vain,*" and "*it was the grace of God that was with me?*"

Ted: Okay.

Don: Why did he say what he said?

Ted: Excellent! Excellent, yes, excellent! He says that because, in fact, when God works on us, He works us out. We experience that working of God. So that's why he says, "I worked harder."

The question is not that you work hard. I mean everyone, unless you're dead or comatose or mentally ill, you're going to be out there working. What's driving the working, though? He said, "*I worked harder.*" That's not the point. The point is not that you lay in bed and do nothing, or that you work actively. That's not the point, because everybody works at something. You can either work in the pursuit of God and the living out of the works that He has predestined you to do—you can either work in that direction, or you can work according to what the flesh and the world and sin and Satan dictates.

Don: Mm-hmm.

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Ted: So it's not a matter of the working. It's a matter of the source of the working. Where does the power come from?

Ted: And I think this is where I'm calling us to rethink the works that we do, where they come from? Where is the source of that power? Because too often we think like pagans, that, basically, in the final analysis, Christianity is that God saves us. But then He gives us a bunch of rules to follow, and it's up to us to get it done. And I'm telling you something. If you follow that route, you will end up in denial and in lying to yourself—self-deception, because you'll say, "It's really not that bad." Well, brothers and sisters, it is that bad!

Participant: Amen.

Ted In terms of our ability to do what God tells us to do, if it were not for the God who is doing them.

Participant: Ted?

Ted: Yes, Sig?

Sig: Back to the question that points to faith. So when you said earlier about He's not improving a life condition or changing a bad habit, or improving our heart,--

Ted: Although those things may happen.

Sig: Yes. But it does need to be totally new. It's not a matter of just improving on something, because that's a big distinction I'm gathering from what you're saying, because what's there cannot be fixed. Is it that the depravity is that bad, or—

Ted: It is unable to be fixed, right.

Sig: Okay. I just wanted to clarify that, because why wouldn't He just improve it? I mean, He created our original hearts, didn't He?

Ted: Right. But rebellion against God is an absolute offense to God. And that has contaminated us so that we're not in any condition to do what He tells us to do.

Sig: So when Bill McCoy is eventually going to go in and get a heart transplant because the one he originally got isn't working, he's just going to get somebody else's heart that's also decaying.

Ted: (*chuckling*), That's right. Exactly.

Sig: He won't live forever.

Ted: No, he won't. Yeah, right. That's a good point. Right.

Participant: There's a message of hope! (*Laughter.*)

Ted: See, the brother over there has an absolutely straight face. It was beautiful! (*Laughter.*)

Sig: That's my man Matt there, brother! (*Laughter.*)

Ted: Okay. So let me press on here. So it's not both/and. I don't think it's a question of both/and—man's responsibility and God's sovereignty. It's not both/and, because that sets things as equal partners. It's not. It's first/then. First this is what God does, and then this is what happens to you. God does all the work, just as He did in election and justification at one end and glorification at the other. He is in you and you in Him. That's union with Christ. And that's what Paul says in Colossians. "*Christ in you, the hope of glory.*" The only hope for any weight of glory—the Hebrew root word is to have weight

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or substance—the only substance I have is to be in Him. Everything else is fluff and meaningless and passing away.

"You are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, so that, as it is written, 'Let the one who boasts boast in the Lord.'"

And I'm going to boast in the Lord because He's the One who is my sanctification and righteousness and justification and redemption and wisdom. That's the basis, because everything I bring to the table is of no substance.

Union with Christ means that God is going to give you a workout. And this relates to your question, Don. God works in you. Think about that. If you're in union with Christ, think about God working out in you.

"We are His workmanship in Christ Jesus for good works." At the same time, God is working His work in you and is changing you. So it all depends on what God is working.

This is a very interesting verse from John the fifth chapter, where Jesus says, *"My Father is working until now, and I am working."* So Jesus is saying, "My Father is working and I am working. Imagine! Jesus is working because His Father is working. And the fact that you and I do any work is because the Father is working in us.

Now it's interesting to note that in this verse, when Jesus said this, "My Father is working and I am working also," when Jesus said this, that was the basis for the Jews to seek to kill Jesus because they were saying that He was saying that "God is My Father and He is the Source of My life. He is My life." That's what Jesus was saying.

That's why people want to do away with us, because we're saying that God is alive in us. Oprah and everybody else has lots of improvement programs. But we're saying, "I can't be improved. Only God can improve me. I cannot improve myself."

Participant: Amen.

Ted: That offends the world.

Participant: That's right.

Ted: And that's the thing that offended the Jews about Jesus. They said, "Okay, Jesus. You're okay, as long as You work hard at following the law and the commandments. But the minute that You start saying that God is working in you, and therefore that You're working, that becomes a capital offense."

This is the amazing union with Christ. The Spirit of Christ is in us to work on us, so that He can work through us to do predestined works. Listen to that. The Spirit of Christ is in us to work on us so that He can work through us to do works.

How do we experience the inside out work of God? First of all, it has to do with the apprehension of truth. It has to strike you as true. The gospel has to strike you as true. I mean, that's the first thing. You can accept Christ as your Savior and go down the aisle and have a warm experience and speak in tongues and be slain in the Spirit and lay on the floor. (*Laughter.*) But unless you believe that it's true, you will not be changed, because I believe that in the end, every one of us will do what we believe is true.

Adolf Hitler killed Jews because he thought that was the truth. He followed the truth. He was not a madman. He followed a rational thought. Every deviant and miscreant behavior comes from the wrong perception of the truth.

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So the first thing that must happen is the apprehension of the truth. In fact, that's why you repent. You repent because you realize that the truth was that I was wrong! Something has to change, because I thought I was right, but I'm wrong. So that comes from the apprehension of the truth.

And that apprehension of the truth always brings with it fear and trembling, because you realize how wrong and how mistaken you were. This expression, *fear and trembling*, along with the verse from Philippians, is used four other times in the New Testament—1 Corinthians the second chapter, the third verse, 2 Corinthians 7:15 and Ephesians 6:5.

Transcriber's Note: 1 Corinthians 2:3. "*I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling.*"

2 Corinthians 7:15. "*And his affections are greater for you as he remembers the obedience of you all, how with fear and trembling you received him.*"

Ephesians 6:5. "*Bondservants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ.*"

Ted: It's the expression *tremems kai phobos*—trembling and fear or fear and trembling.

But the question is, what does that mean? What does it mean that we have fear and trembling, after we apprehend the truth that indeed Jesus is the Son of God, that He died for me, He's my life and that without Him there is no life at all? I mean, after we apprehend that, why does it cause fear and trembling?

Let's look at 1 Corinthians the second chapter, the third verse, where Paul talks about his appearance before the Corinthian church. And he says, "*I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my message were not in the plausible words of wisdom, but in the demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith might not rest on the wisdom of men but in the power of God.*"

Paul says, "*When I came to you, I came to you in much fear and trembling, because my speech didn't seem very wise*"—"not in plausible words of men's wisdom, but in the demonstration of the Spirit and of power."

Why did Paul have fear and trembling as he stood and preached before the Corinthian church? I mean, at that point Paul had been a believer for over twenty years. Do you think he didn't have a lot of experience preaching and teaching?

Participant: Amen.

Ted: I mean, this guy was a tremendous preacher and teacher, although not based on the methods of the Roman and the Greek philosophers. Why do you think he was shaking in his boots when he went to preach to the Corinthians? That might help us get insight into working out your salvation with fear and trembling. What do you think?

Participant: He was aware of the holiness of God and how separated we are, who we are compared to God. It's not even close.

Ted: Right. So he was aware of the holiness of God. That's absolutely true. He shook in the presence of God. Yes?

Participant: I think he was afraid that his self would get in the way.

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Ted: Yeah. That's what Watchman Nee says. I like his explanation. He was shaking with fear and trembling because he feared the old man. He feared what the flesh could do to the message.

And that is something we ought to fear and tremble, because there are plenty of great preachers who have great messages, who are full of the flesh and of the world. I fear and Bruce fears and every one of us who teaches up here fears that it will be me rather than Christ, and too much of me. And therefore that is such a heavy obligation that I come up here with fear and trembling.

So therefore "*work out your salvation with fear and trembling.*" And the fear and trembling you have is that as you work it out, you will fall back into the flesh rather than into the Spirit.

Participant: Could you elaborate on that, Ted? I mean, what would it be like to fall back into the flesh?

Ted: A focus I think, in part, on what I can accomplish, on my strengths and my abilities. It's pretty nuanced at this point. But I think that it's something we need to think about. Were you going to say something? Sig is going to save me from your question. (*Laughter.*)

Sig: I was wondering if you being worried about your flesh, you'd be worried about the crowd's reaction. They may say that your theology is wrong and you know it's right. And you may cave in or change to accommodate the majority.

Ted: That's right. In fact, when I'm done teaching here and I look out at you folks, there are times when you start to look bored and distracted. And my flesh reacts to that. And it says, "Oh gosh! I've got to do something that gets their attention back. I've got to tell a joke or say something funny."

Now is that what the Spirit says?

Participant: No.

Ted: The Spirit says, "Ted, why are you worried about what they're thinking about? Is it the truth?"

Participant: Let God do His work.

Ted: Let God do His work. Quit trying to jump in and do God's work for Him.

Participant: Amen.

Ted: Right. Yes?

Participant: And Acts 18 is where Paul comes to Corinth. Acts 17 is where he's in Areopagus. He has a wonderful sermon.

Ted: Yes.

Participant: It has philosophical categories. It's just great. But there were very few believers who followed him. And they said, "Come back. We'll discuss this some other time," rather than being convicted by the Spirit.

Ted: Right. So that's right. Exactly. I really just need a whole other session to wrap up a lot of this. But let me just go through it more rapidly, because somebody pointed out last week that there was an answer to prayer. I ended on time. (*Laughter.*)

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So the first thing is how do we experience this great God working in us and doing this miracle of sanctification? We experience this first of all by the apprehension of the truth. And the truth causes us to tremble and have fear of our old man.

The second thing is *desire and want*. I think, as I've said before, that God's greatest gift to us at conversion is desire. The fact of the matter is that the natural man does not desire the things of God. That's all there is to it. Do you want to know the difference between you and somebody who is not saved? It's not because you're a better person, or have a better example, or are more loving and kind. It's because you desire the things of God.

Now do you do it perfectly?? No. Do you do it poorly? Yes. But you do desire. There is some desire there for the things of God.

It's interesting that in Romans 7 that when Paul is talking about "*the things that I don't want to do*," six times in those six verses he used the word *desire*. So every time Paul points to the fact that he is not doing what he should be doing. Yet he says, "I desire. I desire the things of God. I am just not doing them yet."

So desire is the first thing. If you desire the things of God, if you desire God, even imperfectly, that is a good sign that you've been born again. Yes?

Participant: Is it enough?

Ted: No, it's not enough, because—thank you; that's excellent. It's not enough at all because God not only gives the desire, but the desire drives.

What does the desire drive? We basically do what we desire to do in the final analysis. I mean, I don't want to unwrap that, but it's an absolutely true statement. You can't do the things of God unless you desire to do the things of God.

Participant: Amen.

Ted: Desire always comes before the action. So that leads to the good works that God has predestined in your life from the foundation of the world. Yes?

Participant: But does God also give us even the desire?

Ted: Oh, absolutely! That's what I'm saying! That's the first step. That's the first gift of regeneration. I mean, when the gospel was shared with me, on the fourth day of Steve's sharing the gospel, I wanted that! Before, it was like Paul in the Areopagus. Let's discuss this later. This is neat stuff to talk about. This is fun stuff. But on the fourth day it just struck me. This was no longer philosophy or a nice b-s session. This was something that was going to change my life. And it scared the living daylights out of me because I didn't want to be changed.

But you know what? I didn't want to be changed. But I desired God a little more—

Participant: There you go.

Ted: Than I didn't want to be changed. You see, there were two desires. It's not as if the desire has no other competition. There's plenty of competition for desire. But in the end God's desire won out and now I'm here today. Tom?

Tom: I think it's key to keep in mind that the desire is not just to be saved, but to be sanctified—to grow and mature. So the desire is ongoing.

Ted: Well, in the end, the desire is really for God. You desire Him no matter what that means. I desire God. It's going to mean cancer. Okay, it will have to mean cancer.

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It's going to mean unemployment. Okay, it's going to have to mean unemployment. My wife is going to leave me, for good reason. (*Laughter.*) It's just going to have to mean that, because, whatever it takes, I want to get to God.

Now most of us don't have that initially. But we grow to understand that. We grow to understand it because we see the other side. And the other side is that it's impossible for me to do the right thing. I have no meaning or substance in my life without Him. That's what we finally come to. It may take us a while to get there.

And in time that drives everything else. That drives me with clients to say, "Well, you know, I was talking about this."

"Well how did you get into this business?"

"It was *agape*. God led me to do that."

Before, I would have been fearful to say that. Now I don't make a big deal out of it. I don't say, "God led me to do this. And by the way, have you been saved?" (*Laughter.*) I don't do that. But I'm no longer fearful of the witness because I desire God more than I desire the affirmation of the client.

I'm sorry, Bill. It's twenty-five of. I'm not finished. Maybe I'll get a chance to finish in the future. But any other final questions? Yes, Bill?

Bill: Do we not say that the Bible tells us that we are saved by grace through faith?

Ted: Correct.

Bill: Faith is a gift as we receive birth.

Ted: That's right; you have to have faith. We do have faith. What I'm trying to deal with is how you guys are experiencing it when the rubber hits the road. And I think we primarily experience it through the apprehension of the truth. The truth seizes us. And then we have a desire for the things of the truth. And then I have there *apostolic action*, and *corrections and discipline*.

I just want to impress this upon you. Think about this. When you've been made one with Christ, when God is alive in your life, then God starts to work on you! And you will feel that working! And often it will be very uncomfortable. But in the end it will be compelling.

I have a difficult time forgiving people. I will just tell you that. I could tell stories about how I've held grudges.

But in the end, that's not true. Jesus said, "*Forgive us our trespasses in as much as we forgive those who trespass against us,*" as we forgive the sins of others. That's the truth. So sooner or later, my life has to conform to that truth. God will keep working on me internally.

You know, it's kind of like that scene from "Alien," where the thing comes off like this. Remember that? (*Laughter.*) I kind of see God doing that. He's kind of going like this in me. And sooner or later, something's got to give. And sooner or later, I'm going to forgive that person, not because Ted has the final say, but God has the final say. He is the Author and Perfecter of my faith. He is bringing to completion what He promised in the beginning.

If it's up to me, I am in despair. If it's up to Him, I have every hope in the world for great success in His kingdom.

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Men: Amen.

Ted: Let us pray. Lord Jesus Christ, we thank You for being a great, great God and the One who does miraculous works. You will even take our hard, dark hearts and turn them around to seek after Your truth, to desire You with our heart, soul, mind and strength, to do the things You've told us to do and to accept Your discipline and rejoice in the fact that You are always at work in us to make us into Your image. And we pray this in Your name. Amen.

Men: Amen. (*Applause.*)