

"You Foolish Galatians!"

Christian Liberty

Galatians 3:1

The Rev. Ted Wood

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Ted: Don, could you lead us to the throne of grace? *(Music.)*

Lord God, those of us You have led to salvation through regeneration, we pray that in our growing in grace, growing into perfection, that we may not become foolish and bewitched as the Galatians were. Keep our minds on the higher things, the first things of the gospel, and set our feet on firm ground as only You can do. And we pray this in Your name. Amen.

Men: Amen.

Ted: Don, thank you for that. That was a great hymn. *(Ted sings.)*

"Of the Father's love begotten,
E'er the worlds began to be."

Written by Prudentius about 400 and something, one of the first great hymn writers. "Of the Father's Love Begotten" talks about the Incarnation of Jesus, that He was the Word made flesh. Thanks, Don.

Don: You're welcome.

Ted: You probably had other words in mind besides that.

Don: Prudentius. Wasn't he an insurance guy?

Ted: Yes, he was. *(Laughter.)*

Yeah, these Protestants debase everything. *(Laughter.)* But anyway, I've been away for four weeks. I'm glad to be back. I was on holiday in Great Britain and then I preached last Sunday at another Anglican church. I preached on the Lord's Prayer, which was the lesson for last Sunday in the Gospel.

But we're back again and we're dealing with Galatians chapters 1-3. I don't know if we're doing it in any systematic fashion. But as I read it, I was very much taken by that line that begins chapter 3, which is *"You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you?"* And I got into both of those words, *foolish* and *bewitched*, and began to think about how the body of Christ in America—and this is probably true throughout history in various ways and in different ways throughout the world—but how the church in America, the body of Christ, how it has been bewitched and how we've been foolish with the key aspects of the gospel. And that has been fueled, as Paul says, by those who are grown up in grace wishing to be perfected in the flesh. So once saved, then you go on to feel that in your own strength you can be perfected and continue to grow in your relationship with God.

Of course this is not true. This is not the way it works. And Paul lays out some core principles in Galatians, and of course summarized in Ephesians. I'm reading one that you do not have there in your notes. But this follows Paul's rebuke of Peter in Galatians 2 where Paul rebukes Peter because Peter seems to be agreeing with those who say that you need to be circumcised or do acts of the Jewish law along with having faith to be saved. So Paul rebukes Peter in Galatians 2:16 when he says, *"We know that a person is not*

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justified by works of the law, but through faith in Jesus Christ. So we also have believed in Christ Jesus in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified."

It's very interesting. I think that's one verse and Paul uses the word *justified* three different times. So he's saying that we know for a fact that in the gospel that I preach, Paul says. And in the gospel the church believes that one is justified by faith alone in Christ.

Paul goes on in Galatians the third chapter and the second verse, following his talk about foolish Galatians and bewitched Galatians, he says, "Let me ask you only this. Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith?" Now to receive the Spirit is to be born again. One does not receive the Spirit of God unless He regenerates him. So it's not as if it's a separate act. So that's what he's talking about. Did you receive the Spirit, did you become regenerate, did you become perfected in your faith, did you become sanctified in your faith by works of the law, or by hearing with faith? *"Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? Does He who supplies the Spirit to you and who works miracles among you do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith? Just as 'Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness.'"*

So these are key solid foundational statements about what is most important in terms of our faith. And of course we all know Ephesians the second chapter, the eighth and ninth verses. This kind of wraps it all up. *"By grace you have been saved through faith. This is not your own doing. It is the gift of God, not the result of works."*

Now you'll say, "Okay, Ted. I understand that. I got it. I don't know why we're repeating this again, Ted, because this is so basic." Well, it's so basic, but it seems to have been lost for many of us, and lost in our churches. And often when I talk to you, I talk about life in the church, besides just your own personal walk with Christ because some of you are in positions of leadership. And some of you support churches that seem, on the surface at least, to have become bewitched and fooled into proceeding and growing not by the Spirit, but by works of the flesh.

When I go up to Erie every week, I stay at an Air B and B. I stay at various Air B and B's. I like Air B and B very much. I've only had one bad experience.

At the place I normally stay, I have a host, a woman, who was an Army soldier in Iraq and then went back for a year as a contract employee, working the border between Syria and Iraq. She was at the border checkpoint. And so this is tough work. She was a Penn State grad. She has been very good to me in terms of giving me a good place to stay.

Well, she had her friend over the other day, and I'll give her the name Emily. And she said, "I'm cooking out with Emily. Why don't you stay? Have you had dinner tonight?"

I said, "No."

She said, "Why don't you stay for a cookout?"

So we had a cookout. It was great. It was grilled. And the great thing about it is that you pray for these things. You say, "Lord, if there's an opportunity to talk about You tonight, let that be the case." Well sure enough, it happened. And I can't even remember how we stumbled into it.

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But you insert the word *God* into the conversation at several points. "Well Ted, what do you do for a living?"

"Well, by the grace of God,"—this kind of thing. So the conversation moved ahead. And it turned out that both of these women who were in their 30s had spent a lot of time commiserating together about their single status, and about whether there were any good men left in the world. And this became, you know, kind of the consuming conversation. And it really exercised them about their future, and whether they would ever find husbands, and once again if there were any good men left in the world.

And I said, "Well, you know, maybe what you need to do is to not start off with what you think you need, but what God thinks you need."

And Emily immediately said to me, "Well, I'm not a religious person."

And I said, "That's fine. But that's basically irrelevant whether you're religious or not." (*Laughter.*) "Thank you for sharing that with me. But it's really not that important, because if there is a God and He loves you and cares for you, then we need to start off with what He thinks and what His purposes are. In fact, we've got to start off with who He is."

"Well," she said, "how do you find that out?"

And I said, "Well, you might want to go to the original source."

And she said, "Well what do you mean? The Bible?"

Ted: I said, "Good answer! Good answer!" (*Laughter.*)

And she said, "Well, I've read parts of it," and whatever. And of course a lot of people in their 30s—I don't even know what generation they're in when they're in their 30s. What do you call it? That's not millennial. That's—

Participant: Gen X-ers.

Ted: Is that the Gen X-ers? And even the millennials get turned off by the Christian faith either because of abortion or gay rights. I mean those are the two issues that always seem to sidetrack folks in that generation.

And you want to say, "Okay. Those are important issues. But you know, look at the universe. How amazingly immense and great the universe is! I mean, you can't wrap your head around the whole thing. To look at the Hubbell telescope pictures and try to get a sense of the billions and billions of light years. And when you look at the One who created that, these issues seem very small! And so why don't we look at the bigger picture?"

And she said, "Well where do you start?"

And I said, "Why don't you start reading the gospel of John? I mean, this is not rocket science. And then go on to Romans, and then try Acts."

So I haven't run into her since our conversation of over a month ago. But the point is that where Emily wanted to start is that she wanted to start with her felt needs rather than who God is. And that, more and more in my thinking, strikes me as the problem not only with unbelievers but with problems in the church. We start off with what my perceived needs are and what my felt needs are versus who God is, because, in the end, it doesn't make any difference what my felt needs are if God—who He is, and what He does, and what He has accomplished is not the priority. We need always to return to that very point.

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So I think this is why the Galatians got sidetracked. And Paul starts off. *"You foolish Galatians! How has bewitched you?"* So foolish and bewitched.

"You foolish Galatians! Anuatos is the Greek word. It means "without thinking, without reasoning a matter through." So basically Paul is saying, "You Galatians are not thinking through this. You're not reasoning through this very well. I want you guys to stop and think about what you're saying and doing, if in fact you believe that you're going to grow in grace and grow in your faith through your own efforts—through your intellect, your human strength, your will power, your feelings, whatever it is, that that's how you're going to grow."

We see this same Greek word *anuatos* in Luke 24:25, where Jesus is walking on the road to Emmaus, and he's explaining everything. And He says, *"O foolish ones,"*—oh ones that don't think, that don't reason through something. *"O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the Prophets have spoken."* So when He rebuked the disciples on the road to Emmaus after His resurrection for not recognizing Him, He did it because they were not thinking about what He was saying.

And this same Greek word appears again in 1 Timothy 6:9. *"Those who desire to be rich fall into temptations, into a snare, into many senseless"—anuatos—"and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction."* Those of you who are rich are not thinking. And that's where you begin to have your problems. You're not thinking about the fact that it is indeed "easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven."

Why is that? That is because the more wealth you have, the more power you have, and the more protected you are in your own abilities, the more wealth protects us from God. I think John Piper says that the only way to overcome that is just to give it away. That's the way to resolve that issue. *(Laughter.)*

So Paul talks about it. He says, *"O foolish Galatians!"* He's referring to the Galatians as foolish. But the second thing he says is *"Who has bewitched you?"*

Now this is a very interesting word. It only appears once in the entire New Testament. There are very few that are like that—*baskino*. It only appears once, and it's used quite often in classical Greek prior to the New Testament. But it means "to cast a spell as a way of wishing injury upon someone, to captivate them, to spellbind by appealing to one's vanity and selfishness." It is akin to another word—*fasco*—which means "to fascinate by false representations."

So what has happened is that he is saying that the Galatians have a spell cast on them. So they begin to focus on the things that are of lesser importance and forget the things that are of greatest importance.

So what I've done here is that what I began to do was that I began to talk about what I call the seven bewitchings. It may not get through them in this teaching session, but I can always come back to it.

Satan has no new tricks up his sleeve to bewitch you. There's nothing new under the sun. Satan has nothing new to bewitch you or entice you or fascinate you with. Why should he? The old ones work just fine. *(Laughter.)* There's a sucker every single time. Don't you find that to be true? Satan trips you up the same way every single time.

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I think of that great line from Luther's hymn, "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God." (*Ted sings.*)

"For still our ancient foe
Doth seek to work us woe.
His craft and power are great,
And armed with cruel hate.
On earth is not his equal."

By the way, if you go to a church that doesn't sing those kinds of hymns, you should be in another church. (*Laughter.*) Because those are hymns with great substance to them.

"For still our ancient foe
Doth seek to work us woe.
His craft and power are great."

He gets us every time. Satan has no new tricks up his sleeve because his current ones are working so well.

So what are those seven bewitchings? Let me go through them with you. These are the things I found to be true. And you may say, "Well, Ted, you missed this or that." And that's probably true. These are seven bewitchings. And Satan gets us because we accept these teachings, these suggestions from Satan, because we receive these urgings and these temptations without reasoning and without thinking them through. We are foolish as Satan attempts to bewitch us.

The first bewitching, of course, is the primary one—bewitched by justification by human effort. You know the story of the Good Samaritan, how Jesus talked about your neighbor. And He starts out that whole teaching about the good Samaritan. He starts talking about who one's neighbor is. And it's interesting that the lawyer, the expert in the Jewish law, starts out, and I love this line. He, that is the expert in the law, in religion, "*he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, 'And who is my neighbor?'*"

See, the greatest point in that whole story is not about neighborliness. It's about self justification. And the expert in the law says this. "*and he, seeking to justify himself.*" And that is the natural human inclination. This is the human default position. I believe that I can make myself right with God.

It's a truth that is unique to Christianity that you cannot make yourself right with God. The problem with Islam is not that they have fanatics who blow themselves up. The problem with Islam is that they believe that they can justify themselves before their God. And the way to do that in the extreme is to sacrifice yourself, to blow yourself up. That's just a natural conclusion. We would be doing the same thing if we believed that we could justify ourselves. We would be just as bad as they are in terms of their acting it out. But they believe in their hearts that somehow, as does all mankind, I can make myself right with God.

So then I need to ask you to think about that, if that's what you believe. If you insist on being justified by your efforts, your goodness, your religiosity, whatever thing there is—your morality, your intention, your good attitude, your sincerity—if that's what you insist on, then all we need to do is ask, "How are you doing?" And usually the response to that question is, "I'm trying."

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And that's not the standard that Jesus set, because the standard that Jesus set in Matthew the fifth chapter is, you must try hard. No, that's not what He said. He said, *"You must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."* Now that's the standard.

So if I say to you that if you believe you can make it based on your efforts, I say, "Well then, how are you doing?"

"Well, I'm doing a little better," or "I'm trying harder." That's not good enough! It's absolute perfection! And the disciples say, *"Who then can be saved?"*

Oh, good question! A very good question! *"With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."* And with God all things are possible in the life, death, resurrection, and the reigning, the glorification of Jesus Christ.

Have you been bewitched by a reliance on human effort in your mind, emotions and will power rather than on your reliance on grace alone through faith alone by Christ alone? That is the first bewitching. That is the primary and the mother of all bewitchings, because that's the one that gets us.

Then from that there is another bewitching. And that's being bewitched by *a one-sided gospel*. The full gospel is like a two-sided coin—God's love and God's righteousness. I have right here with me an old English penny. On one side is the head of the monarch. On the other side is Britannia, the face of the nation. The national head, the political head. There are two sides to this coin.

And I have a family friend who is a pastor. And every time we get together, we get into a fight, because that person only wants one side of the coin. He wants the side of the coin that is God's love and mercy.

But this is the hard truth of God's righteousness. Now look at these verses. This is the hard truth of God's righteousness.

"Who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire, and like a fuller's soap." That's Malachi 3:2.

Or this great word from God to Moses. *"Then the LORD said to Moses, 'I have seen this people, and behold, it is a stiff-necked people. Now therefore, let Me alone.'" "Leave me alone,"* says God, *"that My wrath may burn hot against them, and that I may consume them."* "Moses, get out of the way! These people are rebellious! This is My righteousness! Get away from Me, Moses! Stay clear, and let My hot wrath consume them" *"in order that I might make a great nation of you."* Yes, Sig?

Sig: I go to an Episcopal church. Our priest said in a sermon, "Episcopalians have a hard time talking about salvation."

Ted: Okay.

Sig: And she went on to say, "Because if we talk about salvation, we have to talk about sin and death." And that's surprising. It shocked me. But yet it sort of filled in the blanks and led me to believe why I don't hear more sermons about sin and repentance. But we do hear sermons about mercy and love and power.

Ted: Right. I agree, right. Well that's the big problem, isn't it?

Sig: Yes.

Ted: Because the fact is that it's only a one-sided gospel. You need both sides of this coin. You need God's love and mercy, but you also need God's righteousness and wrath

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against sin. I mean, they both have to be preached. God's amazing love and amazing grace is not amazing unless it comes up against God's hot wrath to consume the sinner. And the fact of the matter is that I have to say that's true. I can't avoid that. I can't avoid God's wrath against sin and sinners by saying it's not true, or saying, "I'm going to argue with you, Ted, about that and show you God's love." Yes, God is love and mercy, absolutely. I fall on that. I rely on it completely. But I've got to get the other side of the coin as well.

I think James in the second chapter talks a lot about faith without works being dead. But I think that he kind of brings the two together when he says, "*Mercy triumphs over judgment.*" So there is God's judgment. But in the end, by the cross, by the resurrection, by the Ascension, by the glorification of Christ, mercy does triumph over judgment.

Face the facts. No matter how uncomfortable, you need both love and righteousness to make a full gospel. And where you don't hear that preached without equivocation, that's where you begin to become bewitched, thinking there's only one side.

The third bewitching is bewitched by *pragmatism and results*. Oh yes, one of the favorites of the modern, successful, big evangelical church—doing what works so it gets numbers, usually evaluated based on the number of people and programs and the amount of money raised. That is the bewitching of pragmatism and results.

I want to go into a little more depth with something I've talked about before. In 2004 Willow Creek Church—you know, Bill Hybels' church—a big, big operation. In fact actually, when we were in England, we were very blessed in the fact that the church nearest us where we were staying in England, St. Lawrence's, in the town of Church Stratton, was a very evangelical church. And we got very close to the pastor there and actually went out to dinner with them twice and had a great time of sharing.

But he made a point with several others from this church of going to Bill Hybels' church, Willow Creek Church, outside of Chicago, and to find out why they were so successful and had so many numbers. Well, in 2004 that church took a survey of the spiritual condition of their church. And that survey was reported three years later.

Now I want to give you a lead up. I'm reading from a journal called "The Christian Post" in an article from November 2007.

"The church activity model for spiritual growth is the model that had been used by Willow Creek for their growth." And this is what the model teaches. "In order to attract people far from God,"—that means people who don't believe—"the church should change in order to avoid those things that outsiders may feel are turnoffs. Once embraced, this dramatically alters that church's worship, preaching and ecclesiology. Under this new paradigm, everything in the church that was formerly directed toward and reserved for those who were baptized believers is now redirected toward unbelievers or seekers, thus the term 'seeker sensitive.'" So everything historically that for two thousand years was directed to believers is now directed to unbelievers.

It's interesting. I was dealing with one of my clients which is a Christian organization. And I got into a conversation with the director of development who is also a pastor. And we talked about Communion. And he sees nothing wrong with having unbelievers take Communion

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Participant: Wow.

Ted: "That's not a problem," he says, "because in that way you're going to win them to Christ." Once again, what counts? The bottom line results. If we can give Communion, which Paul instructs to take in an unworthy manner puts you in jeopardy of God's condemnation; if you take it in an unworthy manner, God's condemnation follows—but this pastor thinks it's okay because it wins people to Christ. This is consistent with this model.

Participant: Wouldn't it make them think that they're saved?

Ted: Well, it might give them a strange idea of salvation—that salvation, once again, is really about meeting my felt needs. I want to be included in this church. I want to have companionship, fellowship. I want to have friends. I want to be part of something that's bigger than me. And if you guys include me, isn't that what Christianity is about—taking care of my felt needs?

I'm reading on with the article. "Practically, this means that traditional expository preaching"—which Bruce does; that's expository preaching—"which emphasizes theology and doctrine, is replaced by topical preaching addressing the felt needs of the listener. Worship centers more on the audience's experience and satisfaction. And discipleship is replaced by large scale programs designed to train and deploy the newly saved in simplistic evangelistic techniques or programs. In the end, the 'kiss method'—keep it simple, stupid!—tends to govern everything." And people by the thousands go to be trained in this method at this church, and it's held up as a great example.

After this survey was taken in 2004 and the results were published in 2007, I actually went online and viewed the Willow Creek video that deals with the results of the study. Greg Hawkins, executive pastor of Willow Creek says, and I'm quoting him, "The study showed this. Increasing levels of participation in activities does not predict whether someone is becoming more of a disciple of Christ. It does not predict whether they love God more or that they love people more." So more programs do not predict at all whether somebody is deeply involved in his faith. They may be deeply involved in activities, but maybe not deeply involved in faith.

Here's what Bill Hybels said about the report. "Some of the stuff that we have put millions of dollars into, thinking it would really help our people grow and develop spiritually, when the data actually came back, it wasn't helping people that much. Other things that we didn't put that much money into and didn't put much staff into is the stuff that people are crying out for."

The stuff that we put millions of dollars into—millions of dollars!—thinking that it would help people grow spiritually has really not had much of an impact. That ought to disturb people. *"O foolish Galatians!"* It's because you're not thinking about what is primary. And everything else, the pragmatic results, always take second place.

What does Bruce say about how you know whether you've had a positive worship experience? He says that you know the truth has been proclaimed, rather than how many people raise their hands. Yes?

Participant: You know, what's kind of interesting about that story is that this man apparently has some theological understanding of the Scripture.

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Ted: Right.

Participant: But the whole Willow Creek thing is needing to improve on it. And they were realizing that flaw after they were already improving on it because he can discern that it isn't doing what he thought it would do.

Ted: Right.

Participant: So he has enough training there and enough Biblical understanding. So it kind of points to the fact that we need to stick to the way God does it.

Ted: Well, that's right. I mean, why not go back to the way they did it at the beginning of the church in the Acts of the Apostles? What a novel thought! (*Laughter.*)

Technology and church growth methods can get great results. They can get great results, but haven't led to closer communities or deeply converted lives. We need to be very skeptical about new gadgets in the church.

You know, it's interesting. I have the same problem in my fundraising business. All of the time I have clients come to me and say, "Well there's a new technology. There's a new online program that can increase fundraising, money raised."

And you know what? I've seen these come and go. And it doesn't work. What works is sitting down one on one with a person, with the best contact we have with that person and thoughtfully asking him for a large gift. That's what works—not the Internet or email, or some kind of special mass gathering. That was very popular at one time, paying people a lot of money to put on these great gatherings for fundraising. It was funny. They worked the first time around. But when donors understood that the gathering was to get money from them, they didn't come to the second one. You know, people are not stupid.

So I have the same problem in my business. Technology replaces the old-fashioned one on one, face to face caring about people, getting down and making that contact.

Participant: Hey, Ted?

Ted: Yes?

Participant: But wasn't there a philosophy among a lot of churches throughout the States and around the world that evangelism is more important than discipleship? They will forget discipleship and just focus on evangelism.

Ted: Thank you. Excellent point, Dick. Did you all hear that? The philosophy—and I actually heard it. I was in a small group and sharing. And a fairly prominent church leader in that group talked about this—discipleship versus evangelism. Not that they're against each other. But the person was shocked! He thought the purpose of the church was to evangelize people.

Well, that's one of the activities. But Jesus said, "*Go into all the world and make disciples.*" And you see, evangelism is easier to quantify. The flesh loves this kind of stuff. You have an evangelistic meeting. Anybody who wants to receive Christ, raise your hand. Come forward. Get prayed over. I can quantify that.

But discipleship is a much harder job because it takes a lifetime. And it's not as easily quantified. How do I know that Dick is growing in grace? How do I know if he's growing closer to the Lord, in the love of the things that God loves? Does he have affection for the things that God has affection for? And is he growing in that?

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I won't know that. There's probably going to be no evidence of that except over a long period of time. And who wants to invest in that? I want some immediate results! Yes?

Participant: In Philippians 1:15 Paul talks about those who are preaching out of jealousy and selfish ambition. He doesn't say, "What then? People are being saved." He says, "*What then?*" "The gospel is being preached."

Ted: Yes. That's right.

Participant: Not "people are being saved."

Ted: Excellent point. You see this again and again. And I just wonder why our leaders don't get this. Are they simply not thinking? Yes?

Participant: I think that sometimes they just think they know better. In a way it's like not believing the Scripture, not believing that the Great Commission means what it says, but that I can figure out a better way to do it.

Ted: Right. Well that could be. And they also could believe the culture. They get too influenced by what the culture thinks is important. Anyway, I'm not here to cast dispersions on leaders because it's a very hard job.

But I just ask, have you been bewitched by what works? And do you shape your practice on results rather than doctrine and sacrificial living? That's the question—bewitched by results and what works.

The fourth bewitching is *bewitched by experience*. Do you believe in a man-centered gospel that begins with my needs and my feelings rather than who God is?

It was interesting that I had a colleague a number of years ago at work and we went out for lunch. And during that lunch this person shared with me that he had been saved, that he had accepted Christ. He was unmarried, and how am I going to say this? He had an active—

Participant: Sex life.

Ted: They had a very active social life. (*Laughter.*) And I said, "Well, that doesn't quite jive with the calling that we have to grow in grace and godliness."

And the person said to me, "Well that's okay, because God and I have an understanding." (*Sighs.*) God and I have an understanding! I would love that excuse. Isn't that a great excuse, that God and I have an understanding, because it's really just me and God. God and I have an understanding based on that person's experience and his feelings.

You know, the response that we often get when we share about the doctrine of election and predestination is that "my God wouldn't do that!" Or "I couldn't believe in a God like that!" But once again, let's begin with who God is! And we only get that from the Scripture and not from what your experience is. Our experiences—happy, glad, sad, mad—whatever we experience—is really, in the long run, irrelevant. Who God is is all that counts. And part of growing in grace yourself is to drill yourself and educate yourself to have that attitude.

I may be scared. I may be anxious about a situation at work—contracts that are not signed. (We always have people get up and leave in the middle of my talk.) (*Laughter.*) But I mean, all of these things that are so consuming! I mean, is Diana giving me enough attention? Are the clients treating me right? Are the kids calling me up? Do the kids

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appreciate me? I mean, all of these things are basically irrelevant when it comes down to who God is and shaping our expectations around that. Yes?

Participant: There's a very good summary on the Brave Men site, the twenty-eight attributes of God.

Ted: Yes.

Participant: I used that the other day because someone was not understanding the attributes of God and what they were stating. So you bring them back to the Scriptures. And that's a great subject.

Ted: It is great.

Participant: It was helpful.

Ted: It is great. It began with studying the attributes of God. And I came into that whole study halfway through it. I don't know how many years ago that was. And I told you this before. The attributes of God. Yeah, big deal! This is going to be boring. Holy molly! It was anything but boring. And it changed my whole way of thinking and my whole way of living and experiencing my Christian faith. It's to focus on God. Yes, Bishop?

Bishop Rodgers: There is the story about the lady who said about the wrath of God, "My God would never do such a thing!" The pastor said, "Madam, your God won't do anything. He is a figment of your imagination." (*Laughter.*)

Ted: So that's why, when I had that cookout and I was talking to Emily, I said, "You need to start off not with your felt issues—the fact that you are in your thirties and single, and are there any decent men? You need to start off with who God is." I mean, it was like no one had ever said that to her. I was like "Whoa! I don't even know if I can get this into my brain—what you just said."

So the question becomes, have you been bewitched by relying on your experience for your assurance in Christ? Yes?

Participant: I'm deep into the seeker sensitive church. But one thing that has always mystified me is that why would a person, let's say an unregenerate person, want to come to church, want to take or partake of Communion, unless it's just a factor of your wanting to be righteous on your own terms, but not to submit to Christ? Could you help me out?

Ted: Well natural man, before regeneration, has a desire for things that are religious. I mean this is transcending. If you've spent your whole life accumulating power and substance and wealth, in time you find that's not very satisfying. I mean that's just a fact.

I find that in fundraising. When people, men especially, get to a certain age, and they've accumulated a lot of wealth, they begin to think about being more philanthropic because they realize that philanthropy, generosity to charitable causes, cannot be something you get in the business world. They have to be able to give stuff away. So that motivates them. That is within a man.

But you see, that desire to go beyond yourself, to go into more transcendent thinking, I mean that's natural to man. But the problem with that is that if you're not regenerated, once you do that, you become proud. I mean, look at Jerry Lewis and his telethons. I mean that is a proud man, if you watch what he says. And he says, "I've done all these

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things. I've raised all this money. I've given all this money away. I've helped all these kids." It's about him!

And what happens when you become regenerated is that God begins to impress upon you that it's not about you at all! It's completely about grace and about what He has given you. You have no ability to make a lot of money and be successful unless God gives it to you. So what are you bragging about?

And so, more and more, that's why the more deeply you get into Christ, the more humble you become. I mean Bruce is a great example of that, isn't he, when you think about his humility? But there are examples of that throughout history.

Let me give you one more before I wrap up. *Bewitched by an anemic gospel*. You know, we really don't want it. It's like Bishop Rodgers' woman. We really don't want a God who is overly demanding. We want a Christianity that's dumbed down to the great commandments, or the four spiritual laws.

You know, when I was traveling down to see my son in Virginia a couple months ago, I stopped in Tappahannock, Virginia. Now I became a Christian and I became an Episcopalian in 1967 in Virginia. And the Episcopal Church, which is not unlike a lot of other denominational churches, in Virginia, they said that the Methodists take you out of the gutter, the Baptists wash you off, the Presbyterians educate you, and the Episcopalians introduce you to polite society. (*Laughter.*) So it's kind of like a movement upward. You were always saying that denominationally you were moving upward.

And this is especially true in Virginia, where the Anglicans formed the FFV, the First Families of Virginia. It's hard to convey that to you, but I was raised in that kind of environment.

So I'm passing from Tappahannock, Virginia, which is an old Virginia town. And there was an estate sale off on a side road. Now that's like a magnet for my wife and me—garage sales and estate sales. And it was wonderful, because this was an old gentleman, an old single fellow who had just died. And he collected stuff. So it was all out in the yard. I mean this was like heaven. We walked up to that yard. Oh, my gosh! Some of you are looking at me and you have no idea of what I'm talking about. (*Laughter.*) You know, you're not collectors; you're thrower “awaysers.” I mean I understand that everybody in the world is divided between those two. It's like cats and dogs and things like that.

So anyway, I happened upon a pamphlet that was written (and I'm not going to say who this was.) And Bishop Rodgers would know who this was. This was a much beloved pastor in the Episcopal Church in the '50s and the '60s. He died in 1970. And when he retired in 1956 from his very polite society, Richmond Church, people at his church put together a pamphlet in which they gave all his great quotes.

Now we've already done something like that with Bruce, haven't we? We have Bickelisms, right? (*Laughter.*) A whole list of them. And those Bickelisms are full of great substance, right?

Participant: Right.

Ted: Okay. After all is said and done, I want to tell you that people loved this man. He was much beloved. "Old Pastor Brown, wasn't he wonderful? He was so great at my child's christening. He was so wonderful at our wedding. He was always so pleasant to

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have over." Or, as I would often say, (*Ted speaks in a mock Southern accent*): "He was delightful! He as absolutely delightful!" (*Laughter.*)

But I've read through this thing. And this is very revealing. I'm so glad I laid my hands on this. This was printed in 1956. These are all his quotes.

He says, "Holy, holy, holy, as used on the cloth of our Holy Communion table." You know, some people have "in remembrance of Me," but other times there's a cloth that says, "Holy, holy, holy." "It means wholeness of mind, wholeness of body, wholeness of spirit."

Participant: Oh!

Ted: And who fell down before the Lord God Almighty? Isaiah, and he said, "*Holy, holy, holy is the LORD God of hosts! Heaven and earth are full of His glory!*" And he says that it means wholeness of mind, wholeness of body and wholeness of spirit. Terrible stuff! Delightful? Oh, absolutely! "Oh, Pastor Brown, that was just inspiring! That was very inspiring!" (*Laughter.*)

Here's another quote. He was giving a talk at one of the Diocesan centers. And he says, "People ask how real Christianity is. Well, I want to tell you that Christianity is as real as a ham sandwich." Is there a disconnect there? He liked ham sandwiches. Oh yes! That was inspiring!

Participant: Somebody's rich Jewish roots? (*Laughter.*)

Ted: And here's another one. "Intellectuals sometimes say they can't be Christians because they aren't smart enough." I've actually heard the opposite—because they're too smart. "Well, let me tell you right here that believing in Christianity doesn't take that much intelligence. It takes all that you have, but it doesn't take much." (*Laughter.*) That's so profound that I can't get my arms wrapped around it.

Participant: That sounds like God is one hand clapping. (*Laughter.*)

Ted: And it's quote after quote after quote. Now from World War II on, this is what people fed on. They fed on this kind of teaching—anemic Christianity, an anemic preaching of the gospel. And we begin to wonder why things didn't work out well as we approach our own time.

But another problem for our own evangelical preachers is that many preachers have a life transforming experience, seize on the gospel and they understand it, and don't go beyond that point. They don't wrestle with God or their faith. They keep repeating the same sermon over and over again. And if you were to ask their parishioners, the people in their churches, "Does your pastor preach the gospel?", they'd say, "Yes, he preaches the gospel." But it is the same message Sunday after Sunday. There are preachers where I know exactly where they're going to end up. There's nothing new with what they preach, because they themselves, I believe, must not be wrestling with and coming to grips with and reasoning through the Scripture.

If I come to you six months from now and don't have a new understanding, then I haven't been doing my work. Yet we accept this. And what happens is that people begin to say, "Well, this is all there is to the Christian faith," whether it's the Four Spiritual Laws or the plan of salvation, or whatever it is. They think that's it.

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But you know, this is so rich! This is rich! And those of you who grow in the faith, the more you read it, the more you get. And the more you ask, the more you dig into it. This is a rich, rich, bottomless pit. I mean bottomless—

Participant: Well.

Ted: Well. Thank you. (*Laughter.*) Thank you, Don. Very good.

So I think that both are very comfortable. Pastor Brown is very comfortable. And evangelical preachers who have nothing new to say Sunday after Sunday are very comfortable as well, because people sit there and say, "Okay. I got it." And they never grow beyond that.

Paul says, "You foolish Galatians!, because you haven't been thinking and reasoning through the gospel. And this makes you susceptible to being bewitched. A spell has been cast so that you seek first the things of man rather than the things of God."

Do we have any questions at this point? We've run a little over.

Participant: What are the other two?

Ted: The other two are *bewitched by political power*, which I'd like to talk about, and *bewitched by superior knowledge*. You know what? I'm Reformed. I know better than those Arminians. I'm brighter than they are. I get it more than they do. I have a better theology than they do. Bewitched by superior knowledge.

Let us pray. Lord God, in Your word You give us many warnings. In this warning You tell us not to be foolish and bewitched by the things of man and the things of the flesh. We pray that You may challenge us. And as You challenge us and stretch us, even as we see our own failure of sin, and how far short we fall of the mark, that we will look to You as the resolution to every issue that we have, because it would be by grace through faith in Christ alone. And we pray in His name. Amen. (*Applause.*)