

LIFE



as GOD intends for His people

*a series of Bible Studies for
Christian believers
by David Legge*

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Life As God Intends For His People - Chapter 1

"Life Eternal"

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Well, good evening to you all, it really is great to be here - I didn't know if I was going to arrive or not, I'm not too au fait with this part of the country, at least when you come off towards Portrush. I'm used to going up to Portrush, I'm sorry Ballymoney folk, but I very seldom come this way! But there were good directions on the little leaflet that I was given from Andrew, and it really is a delight to be here with you tonight. I've been anticipating these meetings for a long time, and praying about them, and I know that the folk in Leaney here have been doing the same, and I do appreciate that. I'm really excited, I have to tell you, about what the Lord is going to do this week through His word and through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. I know that there is a burden, particularly with Andrew and the folk organising the meetings, and that's a good start - to have a burden - and they have been praying and looking to God, and we're now waiting on Him for to come and to bless the truth of His word.

Now, the title that has been taken for this week is 'Life As God Intends For His People'. I didn't take the title initially, it was suggested, and I took the suggestion - as someone once said to me many years ago: 'It's only a suggestion, but remember who's making it!'. I took the suggestion and all of a sudden, and I really mean this, all of a sudden one night, just sitting by the fire with my Bible, the titles of the subjects just came to me one by one. So I'm going to preach to you under that heading: 'Life As God Intends For His People', and tonight we're looking first of all - we're going to do a real Bible study tonight, I hope you've come for a real good page turning of the scriptures - we're going to look at 'Life Eternal'.

So we're turning in your Bible to John's gospel chapter 17, John chapter 17 - in fact, there's the very bit of paper, the very bit of paper with all the headings on it - tomorrow night, in the will of the Lord, we're going to look at 'Life Empowered By The Spirit', and we're going to look at the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. Then the next night we're going to look at 'Life Of Grace Not Law' - that's very important, a lot of Christians are trying to live their Christian life by obeying a set of rules and regulations, that's not how you live the Christian life. Then the next night, that will be Wednesday night, we're going to see that it's a 'Life Of Hearing God' - you may not be aware of that, but the Christian life is a life of hearing from God on a constant basis. Then Thursday night and Friday night I'm going to take two nights to cover 'Life Free From The Enemy'. On the first night, that's Thursday night, I'm going to look at a life free from oppression, the demonic oppression comes from the devil and evil, and also a life free from unforgiveness, because often those two things come together. Then on Friday night we're going to look at a life free from anxiety and fear. Then the last night, this day week, we're going to look at a 'Life Of Love' - for that is the very thing that the Lord Jesus and the Apostles told us would define us as Christians, our love for one another, and our love for this lost world.

But tonight we want to lay a foundation, if you like, what this life is in essence - essentially what this life that we have been given is: it is 'Life Eternal'. I just want to

read one verse initially from John 17, this has come to be known as the High Priestly Prayer of our Lord Jesus just before He travels to the cross - just one verse, verse 3 please of John 17: *"And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent"*. Amen.

Let's pray together just for a moment please, and I want you now as we pray - and we will probably do this every night - I want you to come to the Lord with an open heart, and say: 'Lord, what do You have to say to me?'. Now, I believe if you come like that, and you ask the Lord to speak to you, He will - I believe that with all my heart. So, whatever your situation is, you're maybe not even a Christian, I don't know, but I want you to come and say: 'Lord, speak to me'.

Father, we thank You for Your holy word, we thank You for the precious scriptures, we thank You most of all for the Word that was made flesh and tabernacled among us. Lord, we thank You - we've even been singing already tonight about the wonder of the Lord Jesus, and how He not only captures the mind but He fills the heart. Lord, I pray tonight, by the power of the Holy Spirit, that the Lord Jesus Himself will stand among us and that we will encounter Him in a new and living way - perhaps people who have had the gift of eternal life for years, but never really understood it, tonight will get a grip of the privilege of what You have deposited deep down in their soul; and those, perhaps, who are not even saved, have never believed, that tonight they would receive the gift of God, which is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Lord, we want to glorify Christ alone tonight. We pray that He will receive all the honour. In His wonderful name we pray, Father, Amen.

Now, the biblical expression 'eternal life' is one that has come to really be associated with heaven, and that is not wrong - but it certainly is far from the whole story. It has been understood down through the years, specifically, as being the very life of God - that's what 'eternal life' is in its essence, it is the life that belongs to Deity, the Triune Godhead, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Therefore it is that very life of God imparted to us. There is also another sense that is given right throughout the Scriptures from the book of Daniel in the Old Testament right through to the Synoptic Gospels, which are the first three Gospels, Matthew, Mark and Luke, right into the major Pauline epistles, into the pastoral epistles, the pastoral letters, and into the little epistle of Jude - eternal life is spoken of as a future life, something that is all wrapped up in the concept of resurrection when Jesus Christ returns again and we who believe in Him are raised from the grave, given new bodies, and go to live with Him forever in an eternal state, the Bible says 'a new heaven and a new earth'. That's the understanding in most of the New Testament about eternal life, it's the idea - if you can remember it like this - of quantity of life, it's everlasting. Once we are raised from the dead we will live forever with the Lord Jesus in this eternal bliss, it's thinking of the quantity of eternal life, it's thinking of eternal life in a temporal sense, in a time sense.

What the apostle John does for us under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit is, he gives us a far deeper understanding of eternal life, he gives an added dimension to it - for his emphasis is not so much the quantity of eternal life, but the quality of this life. In one sense, he is telling us that this is different from the old existence: before we are regenerated, before we're converted and born-again, life - well, that's a bit of a laugh in itself, because it is far from life, it's filled with hate and sin, pain and death, it's not life as God intended for any of humanity let alone His people - but this life that God imparts now by grace gives us a total transformation to what life has been known to us

to be. John's eternal life does not therefore just begin in the future when Jesus returns and when we are raised from the grave, but, as we read through John - and you'll feel by the end of this evening that you have read through John! - but as we dip into it in great detail you're going to see that John tells us that eternal life is already the present personal possession of anyone who believes in Jesus. Those who have entered into fellowship with Christ through faith, they have life as God intended for His people.

So let's look tonight at how John himself explains this life eternal. I'm going to give you about six headings, and if you have pen and paper it would be a good thing to jot these down. I don't imagine you will remember them - I thought of them, but I'll not remember them, so you'll hardly remember them! So I think you should write them down if you possibly can for your benefit. The first thing that John teaches us about eternal life is right back in chapter 1, so I want you to turn back there with me. John tells us the origin of this life, John 1 and verse 4: 'In Him was life, and the life was the light of men'. Right away John is introducing us to a Person, not a concept, not a principle, but a Person: 'In Him was life, and the life was the light of men'. Immediately the Spirit of God is teaching us that if we are to know this eternal life we must know a Person, the Lord Jesus. Of course, if you go to chapter 5 and verse 26, again we see this reiterated by the Lord Himself: 'For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself'. It's in Him, you see, so don't be thinking of eternal life as this sort of cosmic thing, this substance, this spiritual type of entity that exists apart from Him - it cannot! It is Jesus Christ! This is the very life of God, and this life has been manifested in Jesus.

Right away John couches this term 'eternal life' in a relationship with the Son of God, in keeping with our text tonight: 'This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent'. So right away, at the beginning of John's Gospel, he shows us that eternal life is not a list of rules, or regulations, or principles, or even religious practices, or moral practices. Neither, for that matter, is eternal life a collection of doctrines. It's not simply dogma - and that's something that we, particularly as conservative evangelicals, need to realise. We might have all off pat what the ABCs of salvation are, but the fact of the matter is: that's not how the Bible defines eternal life. Let me show you again, chapter 5 of John, verse 39 of chapter 5, speaking to the Jews who were of course studious concerning the scriptures, they knew their doctrine better than probably you and I do, in verse 39 Jesus said to them: 'You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life'. Do you understand the equation that they made? They equated eternal life with having the Scriptures, and having the right teaching. Many evangelicals do that. 'You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me'. He's saying: 'You don't realise that these Scriptures are actually presenting a Person to you, and it's Me'. Verse 40: 'But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life'. 'This book that you take so much pride in, and you know back to front, you rabbis and scribes, this book that you can quote since you were knee-high - this is the book about Me, and I'm the only One who can give life, but you won't come to Me'.

I wonder is that speaking to anybody in the meeting here tonight? Have you ever come to Christ? He's the only way you can have life. You can come to church, but you'll not get life there, you need to come to Christ. You see, the law of Moses, the first five books of the Bible, really to sum it all up they simply said: 'Do this and live' - that's what law is. But the problem with the law - in fact, it wasn't a problem with the law, the law of God is perfect, the Ten Commandments, there's nothing wrong with them,

the problem with them is us. As Romans chapter 8 says: 'The law was weak through the flesh' - now the law doesn't have any flesh, we have got the flesh, and that's what it means. The problem with the law was not the law, but the people to whom the law was given - they couldn't keep the law! We cannot keep law. Whether it's the Ten Commandments, or whether it's your particular personal list of ethics - I don't know if you have one or not, most people do, even Christians do - what we need as sinners is not a new list of rules, we need a Saviour! That's why the law was given: to show us our sin. That's why John says in John 14, quoting the Lord Jesus: 'I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man comes to the Father but by Me'. In other words, you can't come to the Father through law, you can't come to the Father through being a Jew, you can't come to the Father through being a Protestant or being a Catholic - you can only come to the Father through Jesus.

In chapter 6 and verse 68 we see this again, the origin of this life, chapter 6 - Peter said it, didn't he? Simon Peter answered and said to the Lord, when the Lord said 'Will you also go away like the others have?', 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life'. You are the Source of this life, you are the Origin of this life - if we go to anyone else, we will not have this life. So John immediately presents this life as knowing God through knowing Jesus. Now put your finger where you are just as a marker, and turn with me to 1 John - I hope you know that 1 John was written by the same John, and 2 John, and 3 John, and the book of Revelation, written by the same author as the gospel of John. It's warm in here tonight, isn't it? Or is it just me up here? Take your coat off, or whatever you have to do to make yourself comfortable - maybe a door could be opened or something just to get a bit of a draught, we don't want anybody dozing off! First John chapter 1 verse 2: 'The life', this life, 'was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us; that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ'.

There it is again - 'We have seen this eternal life, we have touched this eternal life, it's Jesus!'. Do you know something? I believe the Christian life could be summed up in one word: relationship. The Christian life is a relationship with the Godhead, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Knowing God as your Father, through Jesus Christ the Saviour Son, through the power of the Holy Spirit - that's it! We write big systematic theologies, and those aren't wrong, but it's as simple as that - it's what God intended from the very beginning, and His intention is that we might get to know Him, the only true God, through Jesus Christ whom He has sent, the revelation of Himself. And wait till I tell you something, Christian: He wants you to have a deep personal intimacy with Him. I wonder is that what you have? That's what we're going to be talking about this week.

Turn with me quickly again to John 10, and this is the gospel of John chapter 10, John 10 verse 14: 'I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own. As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep'. Now if you have an NIV, or an ESV, or a more modern translation it will read thus in verse 14: 'I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own, just as the Father knows me, even so I know that Father, and I lay down My life for the sheep' - do you know what that's saying? This eternal relationship that was with Father, Son and Holy Spirit throughout all eternity, a perfect love-fellowship, Jesus is going to the cross here in chapter 10 to lay down His life for His sheep, that -

just as the Father loves the Son, and the Son loves the Father - that we could have such an intimate relationship with God. Does that not blow your mind? Or maybe I should ask it another way: is that what you're experiencing?

You see, in Ulster - and I hate to always sound as if I'm hammering people's conceptions in our land, but there's a lot of checks and balances need to be brought in. In our wee country, salvation and eternal life is just thought of as: 'You need to repent of your sins and believe Jesus Christ died for you, and you've got a free ticket to heaven' - and that's the sum total of a lot of people's conception, when Jesus never defined salvation in those terms. That's part of it, but it is to know God through Jesus Christ, it is to share in the fellowship, the life, and the love of the Godhead of heaven! Now, is that your Christian experience?

The origin of this life is a Person, and this life is really a relationship with Him. Here's the second thing I want you to see, the commencement of this life - chapter 1 again, verses 12 and 13. Now look how John defines this commencement of eternal life: 'As many as received Him, to them He gave the right', or the authority, 'to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God'. Right away he's again saying that if you want to have this eternal life, what do you need to do? Receive! What you need to receive? Him! Isn't that what it says? It doesn't say you need to receive this truth, or this list of a basis of belief - is that what it says? It says you must receive Him, and receiving Him results in what we call 'the new birth'.

Turn to chapter 3 of John verse 3 - and of course Nicodemus has come to Jesus by night and has asked Him questions about this whole issue, and in verses 3 through to 7 we get an exposition on the new birth: 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God'. Nicodemus said to Him, 'How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?'. Jesus answered, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again''. The commencement of this life is by receiving the Son of God and being born-again - that is how this life is imparted. It's only possible, as we see John expounding here throughout verses 9 through to verse 13 and into 14 and 15, it's only possible because of the sacrifice of Calvary, the payment that has been made for sin on our behalf by Jesus at the cross. Verse 14: 'As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up'. It is sin that has prevented us partaking of the life of God, but He who was life - chapter 1 verse 4 - in whom was life, He yielded up His life so that we might partake of life. How do we partake? By responding to the Saviour, receiving Him in repentant faith - verse 15 of chapter 3: 'that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life'.

Therefore then follows in verses 16 through to 21 a simple explanation of the gospel if ever there was one, reiterating that the means of entering into this relationship with God is through faith in the Saviour. Look at these verses, verse 16: 'For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the

condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God'. In chapter 6 and verses 28 and 29 we get the same teaching, that it is by faith that we enter into this life. Chapter 6 and verses 28 and 29, the context is that the Jews were questioning the Lord Jesus about what they had to do to earn God's salvation. In verse 28: 'They said to Him, 'What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?'. Jesus answered and said to them, 'This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent''.

Now maybe you think: 'Did I come all this way to hear something I already know?'. Well, I'm sure many of you know that you're saved by grace through faith - that is how you receive eternal life, by receiving Jesus Christ - but many believers do not realise that their relationship with God cannot be substituted by good works. We're very quick to tell people: 'That's not how you're saved', but as we will see throughout the week, neither is that how you continue - and you certainly cannot substitute any relationship by works. It's like trying to replace your earthly father with your boss - one you are employed by, and the other you are begotten by, you belong by blood - two totally different relationships. You cannot come to God by works, and you cannot maintain any association with God merely on the basis of works - this is a faith-based relationship! On Tuesday night we'll talk much more about that when we talk about this life being a life of grace and not law.

Other people try to substitute this relationship through flesh and blood, human relationships. This relationship with God cannot be substituted by a relationship with others - people who seek satisfaction, and meaning, and connection, and belonging with their family, or in sexual or marital relations - it cannot be done. We see in chapter 4, if you look at it, a woman who tried to do exactly that, we know her as the woman of Samaria. She was at the well at noon time, nobody wanted anything to do with her - that was the hottest time of the day, and because people didn't want to associate with her, she had to go there at that time when no one was around; but Jesus, He needed to go through Samaria to meet this woman. She was married five times, and the guy that she was cohabiting with was not her husband. Right away we realise that she's trying to gain meaning and satisfaction and belonging through marriage, through relationships, we might say through sex - like much of our society today. Jesus came to her in verse 10, and He says: 'If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him', 'Me', He means, 'and He would have given you living water'. Verse 14: 'Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life'.

Do you see this? She was trying to substitute eternal life with human relationships, that's what a lot of people are trying to do - they think that the reason they are here is to care and look after their family, and that is part of the reason why we're here, but that is not the goal. Here's the problem: human relationships were given to us by God to be a pointer to our intended relationship with God as our Father, that's why you had a human father, to point you to your Heavenly Father. The problem is, some of us had rotten fathers, and maybe that has skewed and spoiled our view of Heavenly Father, but that's not the way it was meant to be. Your human father was meant to be an example and a signpost to you, to realise that there is a Heavenly Father. 'Husbands

love their wives, even as Christ loved the church and give Himself for it' - the marriage bond and institution in society is meant to be a pointer, it's meant to point people to the eternal relationship between Christ and the Church - but what do people do? They stop at the signpost. It's like getting the bus to Belfast, and getting off at Ballymena at the first sign to Belfast, because you've mistook the sign for the destination - and that's what most people in our world are doing. That is why Satan wants to destroy marriage and family-parental relationships, that's why he wants to pervert human sexuality and marriage, because they're signposts!

You see, the only way effectively to fulfil our human relationships is to have a relationship with God in a rightful place, for then those relationships will fulfil their purpose. We must first pursue a relationship with our Heavenly Father through His Son Jesus Christ. Most people, as I said, have mistook the signs for the destination, and they have even substituted their human relationships - there's someone here tonight doing this, Christian or not - you've substituted your heavenly relationship with the human relationship that you have with a husband, a wife, with your children, or with your parents. Do you know what that is in God's eyes? I'm sorry to shock you by saying this, but it's idolatry! Family is good, but when family gets in the way of your relationship with God, it's sinful - and do you know something? It can be cursed, because we don't have God in His rightful place in our lives. If I had time I would show you from 1 John, John's first epistle, do you know what the very last verse of the first epistle of John is? The epistle is all about fellowship, the same as John's Gospel, all about fellowship with the Father, the last verse reads thus: 'Little children, keep yourselves from idols'. An idol is anything that is a substitute for a relationship with God, that takes the place of this special relationship - it can be someone, it can be something, can I tell you: it can even be something religious! It can be something spiritual! It can be your prayer life, it can be your Bible. Don't misunderstand me now, the Bible is how we know God, as we will see throughout the week, and He reveals Himself - but, as the old hymn says, 'Beyond the sacred page, we seek Thee, Lord'. There's a lot of people, and they know their Bibles back to front, just like the Pharisees we read about did, but they don't meet Christ through the word.

It could be a spiritual thing, it could be spiritual gifts, it could be an idiosyncratic pet doctrine that you have - and our land is full of it. Do you know what I believe? You can have your doctrines, and I have mine, and I believe them - but I believe many people who are on a crusade for a particular pet doctrine, whether it's Bible versions, or a particular mode of dress, or whether you're a Calvinist or Arminian, or whether you believe the Lord's coming before the tribulation, during it, or after it - now, I'm not saying this for everybody, and I have my own beliefs on those things, don't get me wrong: but a lot of people, that's all they live for, and it's because they haven't got a vital, intimate relationship with the Lord Jesus! It's a substitute for that, it makes them feel good, it pumps the blood through their veins, but it's an idol, because they're not satisfied simply with walking with Jesus, because they don't have the walk!

I don't know what denomination you are - someone once called them abominations - maybe that's wrong, but I don't know which you are, and I don't really care. You don't know which I am, I don't even know which I am! But sometimes our denomination becomes an idol - and do you know how you know? When you look down your snout at somebody else because they're not yours - that's how you know. Ministry can even become an idol, doing the Lord's work, and it can substitute a relationship with Him. I'm tempted to digress, but we'll not.

The origin of this life: the Person. The commencement of this life: new birth, it's by faith, it's not by works, and it's not meant to be substituted by any other relationships. Here's the third thing: the superabundance of this life. Chapter 10 please, chapter 10 verses 9 and 10: 'I am the door', Jesus said, 'If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly'. That 'more abundantly' there could be translated, 'That they might have it overflowing, to the full'. Let me ask you: is that your experience as a Christian? If you knew some of the places I travel round, and some of the faces I have to look at - honestly! You wouldn't think they had overflowing, superabundant life - I'm not speaking about you dear folk! But is that what you experience? Overflowing life! Often the reason why we're not experiencing it is: Satan is robbing us, do you know that? That's why I'm going to spend two nights on the enemy this week, because Satan can use so many means, whether it's sin - sin will rob you of the superabundant life; whether it's habits that mightn't be particularly immoral, but they are weighing you down from running the race and enjoying this life; they may be mental or emotional disturbances, that's why we're going to look at fears and anxieties; they may be insecurities that you have; there may be pain in your past, there may be bad memories, there may be unforgiveness that has been unresolved for years; there might be demonic oppression - there could be all sorts of reasons, but if you are not enjoying the superabundant life that is spoken of here, overflowing, bubbling over, it could be that Satan is robbing you.

Jesus said to that woman at the well, let me just remind you, you don't need to turn back, in John 4 verse 14: 'the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up', bubbling up, 'into everlasting life' - that's what this water is meant to do. The 'water' means 'Spirit' there, that's what it's being used as an analogy for, the Holy Spirit bubbling over, flowing out of your life. When you're completely surrendered to Christ, and when He's welcome in your life, you're not just born-again, the Holy Spirit isn't just resident, but He is President, He is presiding over everything - and when He is, He ought to be satisfying your soul! Are you satisfied with Jesus Christ? A lot of Christians aren't satisfied - that's why they're running after every mod con going, that's why they're trying to embellish their lives, that's why they're trying - and don't get me wrong, I don't think we ought to be in the dark ages as the church - but that's why so often we are hankering after all sorts of gimmicks to try and keep people, because we ourselves don't appreciate the wonder of this all, we haven't tapped into this life!

Chapter 6 verse 35, Jesus said: 'I am the bread of life', here's John giving us it again, 'He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst'. Are you hungry and thirsty after something that you've never found as a Christian? He says you'll never hunger, you'll never thirst - now I'm not saying you'll be complacent, and you'll be wrongly satisfied, not seeking after God any more - but the more you are filled, the more you will want of Christ. In chapter 7 verse 37 we have the same thing: 'On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, 'If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water''. In chapter 4 He talked about it bubbling up and springing up, now He's talking about it's so overflowing, this superabundant life, that it's reaching out to others - it flows out to touch the lives of those around us.

So that leads me on to the fourth point, the productiveness of this superabundant life. The origin of this life: Jesus. The commencement of this life: the new birth. The superabundance of this life: satisfying. Then the productiveness of this life, it ought to overflow and hit other people around us. In chapter 15 we have a wonderful example that the Lord gives of this in allegory. Of course we don't have time to go into it all, but verses 1 to 8 we will read together. Jesus said: 'I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine', there's the relationship, 'neither can you, unless you abide in Me', relationship. 'I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing' - without being in relationship with Me, you can do nothing. 'If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples'.

Now, just as natural life is productive, so is eternal life. This life abiding in us, John 15 says, ought to bear fruit - the requirement is: abiding in the life source, abiding in the Vine, and He abiding in us by His Word and by His Spirit. So, in other words, just stay where you are in Christ. You've got to learn who you are in Christ, you've got to learn the blessings and the benefits of what it is - read Ephesians chapter 1, for instance, and you'll find out what it is to be in Christ - wonderful! A lot of Christians are down in the dumps, because they don't realise their identity of who they are in Christ - and when you abide in that, Jude says, 'Keep yourselves in the love of God', you start producing stuff without even trying because you're taking the sap of the life from the Vine. But if there is not abiding, John says, there will be no fruition, no production. The Father is the Vinedresser, and He will have to do some work on you, discipline. Verse 2, the Authorised Version says, in fact every version says: 'Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away', but some margins say 'He lifts up', and the Greek actually can be rendered as that 'He lifts up'. The culture of vine dressing in those days, and even now in fact, I believe, in some parts, would lend itself to prove that what was going on here: if there was a vine was not bearing fruit, the farmer, the vinedresser, would come along, and he would raise that vine up - he would take maybe rope, or some other instrument, and raise the vine up so that it could be exposed to the light in order that it might have a chance to bear fruit.

You see, the Lord sometimes has to come along and discipline us, or encourage us, if we are fruitless branches, bring us into the light, bring us into the air, that hopefully we might bear fruit. Or He might have to prune us, we see that here in verse 2 as well, pruning to be more fruitful. Pruning can speak of cleansing here. Jesus says in verse 3: 'You're already clean because of the word which I have spoken onto you' - just as a real vine it needs to be cleansed from insects, and mildew, and fungus; so the Christian needs to be cleansed from worldly things that cling to him, so that he might produce. This is what this life is: it is eternal life, it originates in a Person; it commences in life through the new birth, through receiving this Person; it is superabundant, satisfying, bubbling over life; and it flows out productively in fruitfulness to others - and if it doesn't, we have a Heavenly Father who cares. He doesn't leave us by the wayside, or put us on the shelf, but He starts to get His hands

dirty in our lives to try and get us bearing fruit again! Maybe that's what He's been doing in some of your lives lately? Maybe that's what He's doing through this week?

Here's the fifth thing about this life: it's a present possession, the present possession of this life - I love this. Chapter 5 and verse 24: 'Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has', in my Bible I have ringed that in red, 'has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life. Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and', and I've ringed this one as well, 'now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live'. Now we've already said that there will be a future day when there will be a physical consummation of these truths, and Jesus talks about it in verses 28 and 29: 'Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth; those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation'. But, you know, John has both regeneration and resurrection in view in verses 24 and 25 - they are not one and the same. Do you see what He says in verse 24? 'Whoever believes in Me has...', present personal possession now. Verse 25: 'The day is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear His voice and be regenerated', that's what He's getting at - they are not one and the same thing. If you look at chapter 6 and verse 40: 'This is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have', that one is ringed as well, 'have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day'. He has it now, but he will be raised up at the last day.

Now, the reason why I'm emphasising that is not just because it's biblical teaching, but there are people going around this very County, not too far away from here, believers, and they are teaching in homes that when you die you're extinct until the resurrection. Many young people are being deceived by this, when John's Gospel clearly teaches - and I love this - that when you believe in Jesus, no matter how young or old you are, you've got that eternal life now! Now! You don't have to wait to the resurrection to get eternal life, you have it as a present, personal possession now! In fact this is the purpose why John wrote - if you turn to the end, John 20 verse 31 - this is what's called the purpose statement of John's Gospel, the reason why he wrote: 'These things are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may' - guess which word is ringed! - 'you may have life in His name'. The last statements of 1 John, when he gives his purpose statement of his first epistle, 1 John 5 verse 13, is the same: 'These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God'.

John stresses that having eternal life is personal and it's present, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. Can I ask you, and I know this is a Bible study and these are teaching meetings, but do you have eternal life? Do you have it now? Can you say you have it? That's life as God intended for His people, that you might presently, personally know that you have eternal life. You don't have to wait until God gets you to the pearly gates, or some nonsense, and weighs up the good and the bad and all these things, to know that you're going to get in - no! You have now, through faith in Jesus Christ.

But quickly, the final point, you'll be glad to know, number six. We started at number one, the origin of this life, the commencement of this life, the superabundance of this

life, the productiveness of this life, the present possession of this life, and then the duration of this life - the duration of this life. John, though he stresses the quality of this life, he also stresses the quantity of it in a sense: it will not cease at death. Isn't that marvellous? That's why these boys are wrong when they say you die in the grave and you're like a dog until the resurrection. Look at chapter 8, John chapter 8 verse 51, what a statement: 'Most assuredly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word he shall never see death'. Do you say 'Hallelujah' about these parts? Do you? Hallelujah! 'He shall never see death'!

Does that mean physical death? Of course it doesn't mean physical death, because if the Lord does not come we will see physical death - but what it means, well, the opposite is in verse 24: 'Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins'. Death in the Bible doesn't mean ceasing to exist, that's where these boys get it wrong, it means separation. So when you die physically, the soul is separated from the body; when you die in your sins, you're separated from God - that's why, when you have eternal life, you will never see death. In fact, John 11 is a wonderful example of this - you know Mary, Martha and Lazarus, that family that the Lord Jesus had a great relationship with, dwelling with them in Bethany in that idyllic countryside scene. Then you know the story, Lazarus falls sick, Jesus gets the message and He disregards it for a couple of days until Lazarus is dead - and it was all to teach this little family lessons on eternal life and on resurrection. Here in verse 23 of John chapter 11: 'Jesus said to her', to Martha, "Your brother will rise again'. Martha said to Him, 'I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day'. Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?'

Do you know what Jesus was doing? He said to her: 'He's going to rise again'; she said, 'I know he's going to rise again, every Jew believes he's going to rise again in the resurrection' - but Jesus is saying, 'No, no, no', and He's taking Martha from an abstract understanding of resurrection in a future last day, to understand: 'Martha, I, I standing before you am the life, I am the resurrection, and wherever I am there is life all the time, I can give life at any time'. What He was teaching her was that the personal, present resurrection power of Jesus was available now, and it's available tonight - if you have never received Christ, that resurrection power is available, and whoever has it has it forever! 'Whoever believes in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and he who lives and believes in Me' - say it! Say it as if you believe it, try again - 'shall never die'. Does that not do something inside you? Shall never die!

It's irrevocable, it's a permanent gift, verse 28 of the previous chapter, chapter 10:28-29: 'I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand'. Do you see if we could be lost, do you see if we could lose this gift of eternal life - listen: God would lose much more than us. We would only lose eternal life and salvation, He would lose His reputation. Not even physical death can separate us from this life of God. I love Romans chapter 8, just listen as I read it to you: 'As it is written: 'For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter'. Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us' - what things? 'For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us

from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord' - nothing! Do you remember that chorus donkey's years ago they all used to sing? 'The world didn't give it to me, and the world can't take it away' - that's true. This is the very life of God.

Well, I just want to finish tonight by turning your attention to one more passage, Acts chapter 5, and I doubt that any other night in this week I'll be taking you to as many passages of Scripture, but I felt led to do that tonight as a foundation. Here in chapter 5 of Acts the High Priest of the Jews and the Sadducees have risen up against the Apostles because of their preaching and their performing of miracles in the name of the Lord Jesus. In verse 18 we read this: 'And they laid their hands on the apostles and put them in the common prison. But at night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out, and said, 'Go, stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this life''. What a life! Is it yours? Is it? That's what we've been trying to do from John's Gospel, expound all the words of this life - the origin, Jesus; the commencement, new birth by receiving Jesus; the superabundance, the Holy Spirit bubbling over in your heart with satisfaction; the productiveness as it outflows and you bear fruit to others; the present personal possession of it; and the fact that its duration shall be - what does the hymn say? 'Life that shall never end!' - that excites me, does it excite you?

Tomorrow night we're going to see that it's 'Life Empowered By The Spirit'; Tuesday night, 'Life Of Grace Not Law', that's going to be the 'how' of holiness, how to live holy; Wednesday, a 'Life Of Hearing God', do you hear God on a regular basis? Thursday, a life free from the oppression of the enemy and unforgiveness that the enemy can capitalise on; Friday night, a life free from the enemy in fears and anxieties; and Sunday, next Sunday, a 'Life Of Love'. Will you come with me this week and hear all the words of this life that God intended for you?

Let me just say that if you're not a Christian here - I don't know who you are, I know one person, but I don't know all of you, maybe one or two. If you're not a Christian, and you never heard anything like this, and you certainly don't have this life - you could be Presbyterian, Baptist, Methodist, Episcopalian, Roman Catholic, Protestant, I don't know - but you've never heard this, and you've never had this, but you want this. Well, see me tonight, and just come and say: 'Look, I want this life, I want this life' - and really that means 'I want Jesus, I want the Saviour', the One who bled and died for you that you may have this life. There is life, life eternal in Him.

Can I tell you something, a conviction of my heart? We can hammer away on revival, and I do it on a regular basis, but we can hammer at it from the angle of telling everybody that they don't measure up - and do you know something? That doesn't work. What works is telling them what God has made you in Christ, and to walk according to the calling with which you are called - that's what we need. We need people hungry for this life that is available, are you hungry? That's what's going to bring revival: people hungry for Jesus.

Father, we thank You for Your presence here tonight, Lord, through these stumbling words. Lord, dear God, such a gift that you have given to us - how could we even begin to try and explain and expound and describe it? Paul could say: 'Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift', Jesus. We thank You for the Lord Jesus, that life, that life - and how, through giving up His life, in faith and repentance toward God in Jesus we can partake of that. Lord, I pray that if there is anyone here tonight who has never

been born-again, that tonight they will be born-again, that they will see it, and they'll be born-again right here and now. For Your dear people that have maybe never comprehended the greatness of this life eternal, that tonight their appetite will be whet for this week, and Lord that some spark would ignite from this week that might send that fire of revival across our land. Oh that believers would enter into their inheritance that has been bought by the blood of Jesus. Bless every person here, take them deeper we pray, thank You for this time and for fellowship and refreshment we will enjoy, and take us on our homeward way with Your protection, in Jesus' name and for His glory we pray, Amen.

Transcribed by Andrew Watkins, Preach The Word - November 2011
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Life As God Intends For His People - Chapter 2

"Life Empowered By The Spirit"

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Well, good evening to you all again, it's good to be back with you. Thank you, Phyllis, for the singing, and Alan for the welcome - and good to be back with you again in Leaney. I'm looking forward this week of ministry that we're going to enjoy together throughout the week. Those of you who were with us last evening will know that we've begun a series entitled 'Life As God Intends For His People', and last night we looked at the subject 'Life Eternal' - and we must have read the whole of John's Gospel! If you were here, you'll have felt that way anyway! We looked at many many verses, and looked at how John defines this life eternal, this very life of God that He has placed in us when we receive His Son. It's a personal relationship, that's how we laid the foundation, and it's vital that we remember that throughout this week of meetings: that Christianity, we said, can be summed up in one word - a relationship with the Godhead. A relationship with God as our Father, through His Son the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit - that's it, the sum total of Christianity. It's a marvellous thought, isn't it? We looked at that verse, John 17 verse 3: 'This is eternal life, to know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent'.

Now tonight we're moving on from that, and we're looking at 'Life Empowered By The Spirit'. Tomorrow evening we'll be looking at a 'Life of Grace Not Law'. Wednesday night we'll be looking at a 'Life Of Hearing God'. Thursday night, a 'Life Free From The Enemy', particularly on Thursday we'll be looking at freedom from oppression and unforgiveness. Friday night we're going to look at the same subject, freedom from the enemy, but we will look at it from a different aspect - freedom from fear and anxiety. Then next Sunday night we will look at a 'Life Of Love' - 'By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, that you love one another'.

But tonight we're looking at 'Life Empowered By The Spirit', and we're turning to the book of Galatians, Paul's Epistle to the Galatians chapter 3. We're going to read a couple of verses from chapter 3 and one verse from chapter 5 - and as I said last evening, it would be good for you to take notes if you can. It would be impossible to remember these things, and I know there are recordings, and I think there will also be actual hard copies available of this series in written form - if you should request it you can get those, I believe that's the case, and I think that's an option on these sheets that you can have at the back. So if you're fed up listening to me this week, you can read it and you'll not have to listen to the Belfast slang any more!

Chapter 3 of Galatians, verse 1: "O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you", that term carries the idea of, it's as if you've been cast into a spell, it's as if someone has put a trance over you, Galatian Christians, "that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified?". These were good evangelical folk, they knew the Gospel, they knew that Christ died for their sins according to the scriptures, was buried, and rose again according to the scriptures. They knew it was through the blood that they were redeemed and bought, and saved

and sanctified - they were taught all this - but something had come over them, and I believe it was spiritual from the enemy, to deceive them. He has to really spell this out in verse 2: "This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" - and this is the verse I want to concentrate on - "Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?". Now over to chapter 5 please, verse 16: "I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh".

Now I want us all to pray - as I said last night, we're going to do this each night. Sometimes you have the invitation at the end of the meeting, I have it at the beginning: we want to invite you to come to the Lord now, whatever your need is, whatever your situation, I want you to ask the Lord now to speak to you and to minister to your need. I hope you've come here not just to get into a warm room for an hour, I'm sure you haven't - you've come, I hope, to hear from God and to encounter God. So we want to ask the Lord, and I believe with all my heart that when you ask the Lord to speak to you, if your heart is open and truly humble before Him, He will speak and He will meet with you. So let's pray and ask Him to do that.

Father, we want to come to you in the name that is above every name: Lord Jesus Christ. We thank You, Father, that we can call You 'Father' through the Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son - for the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. We saw last night that we needed a Saviour, and we thank You that Christ Jesus came, and we thank You that through Him, He is the way, no one can come to the Father but by Him. We are coming, Lord, by the blood-sprinkled way in the name of Jesus to You tonight, by the unction of the Holy Spirit - and we pray now that we will be enlightened and instructed, that You will reveal to our minds and our hearts this great truth about the power of the Holy Spirit that is necessary to live this life as You have intended as Your followers, as Your children. So Lord, we pray now for the help - it's an awful thing for a man to stand in a pulpit, Lord, and talk about the Holy Spirit without the Holy Spirit! Lord, let us not have a teaching lesson tonight, as if we were in school, but not know the first thing experientially about this matter. Lord, we want to be learning on the job tonight, we want to meet the Holy Spirit in His power in this place. We want to encounter the Lord Jesus in His risen power through the Holy Spirit, whom He has sent to be a Comforter to us of the same kind. So, Lord, come we pray, come and meet with us - for Christ's sake, Amen.

Now it's necessary for me to give you a bit of a background to the book of Galatians very quickly, it's easy to do. The Galatians were believers and, as I said, they believed that Christ died for their sins, was buried, rose again, and they were taught from the apostle himself that it was through faith alone that they partook of that sacrifice of redemption. You know that, and we laboured that last night: by grace through faith, not of works - but something happened in Galatia. There was a group of preachers called Judiasers, of Jewish origin, and they came to these Gentiles in Galatia, and they said: 'No, that's right, Christ died for your sins, and you must believe in Him, but that is not enough - there is more for you to do'. They brought this doctrine in that you've got to still adhere to the laws of Moses, and the rites, and the rituals, and the ceremonies, and the practices of Judaism - you must be circumcised, and keep the ceremonial law and so on. So they brought them under this bondage of legalism, and we will touch on that far more tomorrow evening, but what I do want to emphasise tonight is that these Christians who had begun in the Spirit, chapter 3 verse 3, they had begun in the Spirit, they were now living their Christian life on a merely human

level. They had begun in the Spirit, but they were trying to perfect themselves by the flesh. You see, you can do that, and some of you here tonight are doing it: you are living the Christian life, you think, by effort - rather than what God's intention was, that you should live it by enduement of power from on high, the Holy Spirit.

If you think about it like this, it's like me starting a journey tonight from Portadown to Ballymoney, and I have a tank half full of petrol - and maybe by the time I get to Ballymena the tank is empty. It would be like me getting out and starting to push the car the rest of the way, rather than stopping at the nearest garage and filling her up again. Have we started in the Spirit, and are now being made perfect by the flesh? Now, as far as Christians are concerned there's a lot of 'pushers' about - they've got out of the car and they're starting to, in the power of the flesh, push the car in their own steam rather than relying on the enduement from on high. I believe this is a reason why a lot of 'Christians' struggle as Christians. They feel: 'I'm just not living what other people seem to be living and experiencing', and they maybe read some Christian biographies and books, and they think 'Am I really saved at all? There is something wrong with me, I'm not experiencing this victory over sin, I'm not experiencing this joy, this peace, and this power to witness and to serve the Lord'. The reason why - often, not always - but one of the reasons I believe in the majority of cases is: they are living, or trying to live, the Christian life in the power of the flesh.

Now, can I tell you something, and this might be one of the greatest revelations you'll ever have in a church meeting - listen: the Christian life is impossible to live. Did you know that? You're looking at me now! It's impossible to live in the flesh because, as we saw last night, it's the very life of God. We cannot live the life of God, and that's why the disciples were told to wait for the promise of the Father. They were to wait, because in and of themselves, though they had a 3 1/2 year apprenticeship with the Lord Jesus Christ and had learned many many great spiritual truths, that was not enough - that's a sobering thought, isn't it? It was not enough to run on the energy of intellectual wisdom, or the experience of what they had with the bodily Christ, but they had to wait for the promise of the Father from on high. Now, you could be here and you could even, at meetings, or conventions, or various other events, have consecrated yourself to the Lord. Maybe you've heard great stirring messages about full surrender, and giving your all to Christ, and putting all on the altar for the Lord - and, as far as you're concerned, you've done that, but you're still not knowing that power and that victory in your life. Well, surrender is very important, but that's our part. The enduement of power from on high is God's part. Now listen carefully to what I'm going to say: some people, well-meaning people, confound the two. They think because they have fully surrendered, and they have laid all on the altar to the Lord, that that's it - that is not it! That's your part, but God's part must come, and it's essential.

A famous Boston preacher, Dr A.J. Gordon, visited the World's Fair in Chicago on one occasion, and in the distance he saw a man robed in bright gaudy Oriental clothes, who appeared to be laboriously turning the crank of a pump. As he turned the crank of this pump, a mighty flow of water come forth. Gordon was greatly impressed with the man's energy as he pumped, and his smooth motions, and his obvious physical conditioning and strength - he was pumping a tremendous amount of water! So Gordon decided to go closer and, as he drew closer, he was surprised to discover that the man was actually made of wood. Instead of turning the crank and making the water flow, the flow of water through this wooden figure was actually turning the crank

and thereby making him go. That's exactly what I'm talking about in relation to the power of the Holy Spirit. Many of us as Christians have been saved and we are trying to crank the water of eternal life and the power of God by effort, whereas what God has intended for His people is that the power of the Holy Ghost should flow through us and should cause us to go! Is that not what we touched on last evening in John 7:37, where Jesus said: 'On the last great day of the feast, He stood and cried out, saying, 'If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water''. We don't pump the living water, the Lord gives it and it outflows.

So I want to talk about this life as God intended for His people, life empowered by the Spirit - and I want to do it under three headings. First of all, this is a life of empowerment. Secondly, it is a life of fullness. Thirdly, it is a life full of fruits and gifts. So let's look at the first: this is a life of empowerment. We want to talk about the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. Now, when you're born-again - we saw it last night in John chapter 3 - it literally means to be born of the Spirit, to be born from above, and when you're born-again you receive the Holy Spirit. In Romans chapter 8 and verse 9, Paul says: 'Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His'. So I'm not talking to you tonight, if you're a believer, as if you don't have the Holy Spirit. You cannot be without the Holy Spirit if you're a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. But you see, God's intention is not simply to be resident in you, He wants to be President. God's objective is always incarnation, He wants us to live out in the flesh His life. As Ephesians chapter 3 verse 19 says, He wants us to be - listen to this statement - filled with all the fullness of God. What about that!

This is why Jesus came. If you turn with me to Matthew chapter 3, you will see this, the first gospel chapter 3 - John the Baptist is speaking here, and he says: 'I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire'. Now the verses following verse 11 talk about the fire of judgement, and of course fire is often used as a figure of judgement, but it's also used - and I could give you several references in Isaiah, Zechariah, Malachi, 1 Peter - fire is also used as a figure of grace, God's grace, for fire does not just purify in judgement, fire purges us. We know this, that fire is a symbol of the Holy Spirit on many occasions in the New Testament. In fact, when you go to Acts chapter 2, the Day of Pentecost, when the church is baptised in the Holy Spirit, what do they find on each of their heads? Tongues, cloven tongues, as of fire.

Sadly, many professing Christians have no fire. I wonder are you one of them? Paul put it like this to the Thessalonians: 'They have a form of godliness, denying the power'. I tell you, Ulster is full of this. You've got all the trappings, you've got all the sayings, you look the part - but deep within you there is an absence of fire. Just as motor cars are designed with an engine to move when there is ignition, fire, Christians are meant to operate with the fire of God in them! So if you're here tonight, and you're an unmoved Christian, or you're a Christian who fails to move others, it may well be that it's because of an absence of fire. William Booth says:

'Tis fire we want, for fire we plead,
The fire will meet our every need,
Send the fire!'

Now I know that the area of the Holy Spirit is a controversial one in the Christian church, and I know there's a collection of folk here from many and varied backgrounds - and don't be afraid tonight, I'm not going to stray into any overt areas of controversy, but what I will say is: in many Christian traditions and denominations this truth has been taught down through the years. Some have called it in Pentecostal circles 'baptism with the Spirit', or 'in the Spirit'; others have understood it not in those terms, but as the 'filling of the Spirit', or 'the infilling of the Holy Spirit'. The Puritans, some of them, called it 'the sealing of the Spirit'. You can come down on whatever conclusion you like, but I stand with Billy Graham on this one at least, when I'm preaching to a congregation like you folk - he said: 'I don't care what you call it, just get it!'. I think he's right. You know, there's a great danger that we can fight about terminology, and biblical terminology is important in its place, but not if we miss the whole point of the reality of this experience that God intended for His people! Whatever your theological persuasion is here tonight, I want you to understand: God's word teaches that we are to live this Christian life not in the power of the flesh, but with an enduement of power from on high, without which it is utterly impossible to live it! I don't care what you call it, just get it.

I believe this can be simultaneous with conversion, I believe that at conversion you can be filled with the Holy Spirit, I do - but I believe that more often than not it is an experience subsequent to conversion. Many good Christians, and maybe you're one of them here tonight, they're trying their best but they know something is missing. Let's be honest: is that you? You know something is not right, you're confused - or maybe, as we touched on last night, you have substituted something else for this glorious experience. Maybe it's a pet doctrine that you have, or it's some new thing that you hanker after - but what you need tonight, listen carefully, God is speaking: you need the Holy Spirit! You need this enduement of power from on high, that's what God intended for His people.

Now the great question is: how? I want to be as practical as possible in these meetings during this week: how do you get endued with power from on high? Well, it's a lot less complicated, I have to say, than we often make it. It's very similar to salvation, in fact. Just as salvation is a gift of God's grace that we must take by faith, so this enduement of power is the same. Jesus has provided our eternal life through the shedding of His precious blood on the cross - and the cross is the way to God, the way of the cross leads home. In the same way, the cross is the way to be filled with the Holy Spirit - in this sense: it's been bought by the blood of Jesus, it has. In fact, everything that we have as Christians is because of the cross, and we don't get any of it by works, we only get it by engaging through faith in what Jesus has done on the cross. So, just as salvation is offered by grace and we take it by faith, the enduement of power from the Holy Spirit is offered because of Calvary by God through grace - and, guess what, we take it by faith.

Turn with me to Luke chapter 11 please verse 13: 'If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!'. There it is! You ask! Based on what? Well, ultimately based on the cross work of Christ, His resurrection - but the promise. What did Jesus say in Acts chapter 1 to the disciples, we've already alluded to it, He said: 'Wait! Wait! Tarry, till you receive the promise of the Father'. So this is a promise that God has given, you can read about it - we don't have time, but it's wonderful - you could take a week of meetings on this alone! Chapters 14, 15 and 16 of John's Gospel,

how the Lord Jesus promised a Comforter and Encourager, another of the same kind who would come, and who would testify and witness of Jesus to the minds and hearts of unbelievers, and would turn the lives of believers into the life of Jesus through faith in Him. It's wonderful, and it's promised.

So what do you do with a promise? What do you do when God gives you a promise? 'Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved', what do you say to an unsaved person? 'If you just claim that, that's God's word, you engage with that by faith, believe it and receive it' - and in the same token, it's the same with this enduement of power from on high. If you're evil, and you know how to give your kids and grandkids good presents, and you're a depraved sinner, how much more shall the Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit when you come and ask. In fact, if you look at the verses running into this verse 13, verse 11: 'If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish? Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If you then, being evil...' - and so on and so forth. Do you see the point? The Lord Jesus is saying: if you ask God for this good thing - don't be afraid of the Holy Spirit. I know there's a lot of wacky stuff on cable television that would put you off the Holy Spirit for the rest of your days, and a lot of it's of the flesh, and a lot that is done in the name of the Holy Spirit is of the flesh - but don't be afraid of the Holy Spirit!

These things that Jesus says the father will not give you - a scorpion is harmful, isn't it? The Holy Spirit will not harm you. So you come to God and, by faith, claim the promise - and of course that involves repentance, just as salvation does. You can't expect to come to God and reach out with one hand for the Holy Spirit, and your other hand is holding on to your pet sins - no, there has got to be repentance involved. But, like salvation, repentant faith is your part - but, just like salvation, the saving assurance is God's part. Like catching fire, which is really what the Holy Spirit is likened to, you've got to provide the right environment and the right conditions in which it can be caught. Repentant faith, taken by faith upon the assurance of the promise.

Let me show you another verse, Mark chapter 11, this is a helpful one in this regard concerning faith. Mark chapter 11, remember we're talking now about the 'how' of this enduement, verse 24, Jesus says again: 'Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them'. Now this isn't some new-age type of philosophy, that if you just wish for something it's going to come true. This is underpinned with the promises of the revealed will of God in His word. If you ask for something that is declared in God's counsels as His will for you, you can believe that you have it - and that's what faith is by the way! A lot of people that come into the counselling room in my missions have a problem getting hold of the fact that God has received them - and that, in essence, is what faith is. If God says, that as a sinner I come to Jesus and God will receive me, you believe that, and that's when you receive the assurance, when you believe it! When you accept it! This enduement of power from on high is the promise of the Father that has been bought by the blood of the Son, and He has given the assurance that if you ask Him He will give you it, but you must believe that in asking He has heard you - and you must believe that you have received. The word is the assurance, and you've got to believe the word.

But with salvation there is also a subjective assurance. The objective assurance is the

word, the promise; but there is also a subjective assurance with salvation. The Spirit of God witnesses with your spirit that you are a child of God - and in this regard it is the same with the Spirit's infilling. There should be a witness that the Comforter has come. Do you have that witness? Let me ask you a question: do you know that you have been filled with the Holy Spirit? Whatever terminology you want to use. Do you know it upon the authority of God's word? Do you know it because of the Spirit witnessing with your spirit? Now let me say: many people have had many different experiences, and I think there is a great danger that when one person has one experience that they say everybody ought to have that experience. I read a lot of Christian biographies, and I have seen many great men and women of God, and they have all sought and found the filling of the Holy Spirit - but in many diverse ways, I have to say. What counts is faith - not even feelings, don't be hankering after feelings! Here's my advice to you tonight, if there should be anyone here - and I hope it's all of you - who wants to be endued with this power from on high that is the promise of the Father: claim it by faith, and let God confirm it however He sees fit.

Let me ask you: have you had your own personal Pentecost? The disciples received the Spirit - in John 20 verse 22 we read: 'Jesus breathed on them, and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit'' - but they still needed their Pentecost. Have you had this enduement of power from on high? I don't care what you call it, just get it - for that is life as God intended for His people.

Here's a second thing I want to share with you, not just the empowerment of the Spirit, but the fullness of the Spirit. We go to Ephesians 5 and verse 18 for this one, Paul is writing to Ephesus here and he says: 'Do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit'. Now, after initially being endued with this power from on high, having an infilling of the Holy Spirit for the first time, what Paul is talking about here is keeping it aflame, keeping the fire aflame. This is conservation of this fire of the Spirit's power in your life. Just as the conditions have to be right for fire to catch - repentance, and faith, and belief, and claiming it, and waiting upon God for the confirmation - so that flame must be conserved and preserved, or as Paul put it in another place to Timothy: 'Stir up the gift of God that is within you'.

Now this statement here in verse 18: 'Be filled with the Spirit', let's look at it for a moment. It's in what we call the 'imperative mood', that simply means it's a command - it's not an option. He is telling these believers: 'You must be filled with the Spirit'. Now that means, conversely, not to be filled with the Spirit is what? Disobedience, because you're not obeying the command! We don't think of it like that, do we? So if you're not filled with the Holy Spirit, it is essentially disobedience. Look at it again, it's in the plural: 'Be you filled', plural, 'with the Holy Spirit'. So it applies to all Christians, not a select few. Sometimes I hear people talk as if this was something for, you know, missionaries like C.T. Studd, or men like Duncan Campbell, revivalists, or the reformers, or great men of God like D.L. Moody, but it's not for little old me. Oh, it is for little old you, it's for all of us! Be filled with the Holy Spirit - you might not have the same experience of being filled in such a dramatic way, you may, you may not, that's not the point. It is for you: 'This promise is to you', Joel said, 'and to your children', to all flesh.

The verb is also in the present tense, which means this is constant. You are to constantly be continually filled with the Holy Spirit, so it's not for special occasions only, it's not something that happened one time and never ever happens again. The

verb is also in the passive mood, that simply means we do not fill ourselves with the Holy Spirit, it's passive, it is something that is done to us. We get to a place where the Spirit fills us! So let me translate all that into a statement so that we can understand, really it could read like this: 'Let the Spirit continually fill you'. So once you get to that place of crisis, that place of surrender, that place of faith, and claim this blood bought right of promise from God, and wait upon God and receive it - as if you have it, even when you don't feel it. Wait for God to witness it according to how He sees fit. You must maintain this by being in a place, a condition, where God can continually fill you.

How do you continually maintain this filling? Well, you've got to maintain an environment that will fan the flames. You know there are environments that will put flames out, but you've got to create an environment that will continually fan the flames. 'What is that?', you say. It's the same thing as the start of the Christian life: repentant faith - that's how you get saved, that's how you receive the filling of the Holy Spirit, and that's how you maintain the fullness of the Spirit. It is a life of constant humility and repentant faith and obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ. It's really the other side of the coin of the Lordship of Jesus Christ. I remember asking the late Rex Mathie what his views on the fullness of the Holy Spirit were, and this is what he said to me - and it has stayed with me all through my life, he said: 'David, whenever you and Jesus aren't arguing about anything, you'll be filled with the Holy Spirit'.

Can I ask you tonight: what are you arguing with Jesus about? What is that thing that you haven't been able to let go of? That dispute that you've had, quite silently of course, you would never vocalise it - but you know it is a thing that Jesus has put His finger on, maybe many years ago or recently, and you know that until you have sorted that out you will not be full of the Holy Spirit, because that area of your life is locked away from Him. You see, the issue is not so much how much of the Holy Spirit you have, as rather how much of you He has. D.L. Moody, the great evangelist, was being considered for an evangelistic campaign many years ago, and one of the organisers on the committee of the campaign asked someone sarcastically: 'Does D.L. Moody have a monopoly of the Holy Spirit?'. The answer came back pointedly: 'No, but the Holy Spirit has a monopoly of D.L. Moody' - that's it! Does the Holy Spirit have a monopoly of you?

Now listen, whatever your tradition is, we've got to get away from this concept of a once and for all filling - that's not what is being taught here. There is an initial crisis, perhaps, but this is a constant - look at the literal translation: 'Be being filled', present continuous tense, continually filled. Whatever has happened in your past years ago, this is meant to become a constant characteristic of your life, every day. We see it in Acts chapter 6 and verse 3 when the Apostles felt the pinch of all the work that had to be done, the expression is 'serving tables' - it doesn't mean they were waiters, it means that they were doing practical Christian work that was taking them away from praying and ministering the word of God. So they set up what probably were like deacons, and they looked for men - and here was the quality of the men they looked for, verse 3 of Acts 6: 'Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business'. Now look at that statement in verse 3, does it say: 'Look out seven men of good reputation who were filled with the Holy Spirit'? Is that what it says? Full, present tense, at this moment they're full of the Holy Spirit.

You see, you could be filled yesterday and grieve the Spirit today. You could have been

filled six months ago, or 60 years ago, but have grieved the Spirit today. As D.L. Moody put it: 'Our problem is our buckets leak!' - isn't that right? We are sinners, and we have foibles, and we have weaknesses, and we fail the Lord time and time again - but the key is to have this constant fullness, this constant surrender, this constant repentant faith and obedience to Christ. John describes it, we looked at it last night in John 15, as 'abiding', abiding in the Vine. The Vine is Jesus, the life source, John 15 verse 5: 'I am the vine, you are the branches. Abide in Me'. We are to abide in Christ as the branches - the life source is Christ, we are to abide in Him and derive our life from Him - but equally Christ is to abide in us, this abiding: His word in us. Do you know what the word 'abide' means? It just means 'dwell', it could also be translated 'make your home'. We are to make our home in Jesus, but here's the big thing: He is meant to make His home in us. The question is: could He be at home in your heart or mine?

Colossians is a book that is very interesting to parallel with the book of Ephesians, it's about a lot of the same stuff. In fact at times you would think they were the exact same verses. The parallel verse of Ephesians 5:18, 'Be filled with the Spirit', in Colossians is Colossians 3:16 which reads thus: 'Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly'. Do you see how Paul puts it to the Colossians? It's again John 15: you're to abide in Christ, but Christ is to abide in you - and one of the ways He abides in you, as John 15 says, is His word abides in us. We are walking in complete agreement, not arguing with Jesus or Heavenly Father about anything, His word is dwelling in us - and so He abides in us, He's at home in us, and we abide in Him.

Dr Douglas Brown preached on the fullness of the Holy Spirit in Wales, and a young man followed him into his office afterwards and cried: 'Sir, it's alright telling me to be filled, but I'm full of...' - and he pointed over into the corner of the room to a cracked wastepaper basket, and he said 'I'm full of cracks'. Dr Brown replied: 'What if you are? For if that basket were lowered into the depths of the sea, it will be filled, and it will remain full. If it abides in the ocean it cannot be emptied, the basket will only lose its contents if it is removed from the sea. Young man, cracks or no cracks, if you abide in Christ you'll always be filled with the Holy Spirit' - that's it!

The results of this are marvellous. In fact what Paul says in Ephesians 5 and verse 18 is effectively: what drink does, alcohol does, in a negative sense, the Holy Spirit - a different kind of spirit - does in a positive sense. Now let me say that that's not an illustration I probably would have used, but Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, used it. He was saying: what drink does to a man negatively, sinfully, the Holy Spirit does positively. In other words, drink dominates the personality, drink determines a person's behaviour, but you're not meant to be a person controlled by alcohol in your personality, or your behaviour controlled by alcohol or any other substance - but you're meant to be one who is controlled by the power and the dynamism of the Holy Spirit. You know a man when he's drunk, don't you? Often you know him by the way he walks - I haven't got time to show you this, but in Ephesians you've got a lot of talk about walking. Chapter 5, for instance, 'Walk worthy', 'Walk in love'. Galatians we read, 'Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh'. You will know how a man walks - in Ephesians we have this statement, just before in verse 15 of chapter 5: 'See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise'.

Circumspectly we're meant to walk, that just means carefully. Where I come from in

East Belfast, a number of the houses are terraced houses, and they've got what we call yards, and an entry at the bottom of the yard. My great aunt, I remember her yard, and the wall around the yard, and all this broken glass from broken bottles that was placed all around the walls - and do you know what that was for? It was to keep the bad boys out - maybe to keep some of them in, I don't know - but I remember watching with intrigue the pussycat negotiating its way round these shards of glass on the wall, she could do it well! That's what walking circumspectly is, walking carefully.

You know a man that's filled with the Holy Spirit by his walk, or a woman filled with the Holy Spirit by their walk. Something else, you know a drunk man by his talk, don't you? On the Day of Pentecost they were filled with the Holy Spirit and they spoke in tongues - it affected their mouth. Jesus said: 'Out of the abundance of a man's heart, the mouth speaks'. So whatever is in the heart - so if you're filled with the Holy Spirit, it will affect your tongue, it will affect the way you talk to people, it will affect the way you talk about people. In fact, here in this passage, look at verse 19 of Ephesians 5, after it says 'Be filled with the Holy Spirit', 'Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord' - there it is, the tongue, the talk is affected.

You know a drunk man by his smell, don't you? You say, 'Where are you going with that one, now?'. Well, in Corinthians we read that we're meant to be a savour of Christ to people around in this fallen world. In other words, when we rub shoulders with people, they are meant to smell the fragrance of Jesus off us - but I'll tell you: that's not what they often smell. Do you know why? Because we're not filled with Jesus, we're filled with ourselves, or we're filled with sin, or were filled with some other spirit - whether it's bitterness or sectarianism, I don't know.

The evidences that a man or a woman is filled with the Spirit are the same as drink, but in the positive. These are the results of abiding in Jesus, John 15:5: 'I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing'. There it is! It's impossible to live this Christian life without abiding in Jesus - and then, when you do, you can bear much fruit.

How much fruit are you bearing for the Lord Jesus? That leads me on to this third point. There is the empowerment of the Spirit, there is the fullness of the Spirit, and then there is the fruit and the gifts of the Spirit. In Galatians 5 we find the fruit of the Spirit, turn with me there please, Galatians chapter 5 verse 22. We have from verse 19 down to verse 21 the works of the flesh, we'll not look at those tonight, but the converse of that is the fruit of the Spirit, verse 22: 'But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit'.

Now this is the fruit of the Spirit. In 1 Corinthians 12, 13 and 14 we find there the gifts of the Spirit, and there is a long list - some people say there are nine, some people more, some people less, you can find them in Romans chapter 12 as well - that manifest the power of God in the church, and that's a whole other subject. We're told to seek earnestly the best gifts, you study it there. But I believe that more importantly - the gifts are important - but more importantly than the gifts that God gives to the body, in God's eyes, is character. You see you have, in the New Testament and the Old Testament, gifted individuals - but their character failed them. One in particular was

Samson, he had gifts given by God, he was endowed by God, but the character failed him.

The fruit of the Spirit here in Galatians 5 speak of character - and the word is 'fruit'. Look at verse 22, it doesn't say 'the fruits of the Spirit', it's not used in the plural, it says 'the fruit', singular. 'The fruit of the Spirit is', again singular, not 'The fruit of the Spirit are', but 'is'. So what we have here is one concept, though it's ninefold in description - love, joy, peace, etc - it is one concept, and the concept is character. Whose character? Is it your character? I'll tell you it's not! I don't know you now, and nobody has been whispering in my ear - but I can be pretty much sure it's not your character in and of yourself, it's certainly not mine - and my wife will tell you that if you talk to her any length of time! Whose character is it? Come on! Jesus, it's His character! It has been manifest by whom? The Holy Spirit in our lives, as we surrender to Him, as we deny ourselves, as ourselves are crucified and we allow the Holy Spirit to live through us, Jesus' life is manifested in our mortal bodies - because it is the Spirit's objective to reproduce the life of Jesus in you - and that is life as God intended for His people.

You see, the enduement of power is important, and spiritual gifting is important, but God is not just interested in power - and sometimes, I have to say, and I have been guilty of this in the past, we can be hungry after more power but God is really interested in character. He wants people to see Jesus in you. Now that's not an achievement of human effort, how could it be? Do you think you could achieve being like Jesus in human flesh? Utterly impossible, that's why the Christian life is impossible - and the only thing that you and I can do is this: we got to receive this life, this very life of God, and we receive it by yielding, by accepting. A machine can work, but only life can produce fruit - and that's what we have here, the fruit of the Spirit. So it means having no confidence in the flesh, but an honest confession of your weakness - that's one of the qualifications of getting filled with the Spirit, remaining filled with the Spirit, bearing the fruit of the Spirit - it's to know your own weakness in the flesh, that of my flesh I can do nothing, and then the other step is to surrender completely in dependence upon the power of God alone. Then you will be empowered to live this life.

The 19th-century philosopher Soren Kierkegaard once told a story about a village inhabited by ducks. On Sundays the ducks would waddle out their doors, down the street to church, and they would waddle into the sanctuary and squat in their favourite pews. Then the duck choir, they would waddle in, and the duck pastor would waddle up to the pulpit and open the Bible. He would read: 'Ducks, God has given you wings, you can fly, with wings you can mount up and soar like eagles. There are no walls that can confine you, no fence can hold you. You've got wings, God has given you wings, and you can fly like birds!'. Excitedly the ducks, they all quacked and shouted: 'Amen!', and then they all waddled home. You get the point, don't you?

You're here tonight and you're not flying, maybe you've never been flying, and you don't really understand why - why you can't make this Christian life work, why it doesn't work for you the way it has worked for other people. Paul said in 1 Thessalonians 5 verse 19 to the church there: 'Do not quench the Spirit', the phrase could be translated 'Stop putting out the Spirit's fire'. I want to ask you: have you been resisting the Holy Spirit through stubbornness in your life? Is there an area of your life that you won't let the Holy Spirit in? Have you grieved the Holy Spirit? You know all too well that there is a sin that you're engaging in, and that's why you're not

filled with the Holy Spirit tonight. Maybe you've quenched the Holy Spirit? You say: 'How can I quench the Holy Spirit?', Well, it's just like quenching or extinguishing a flame. A flame will go out if it's ignored, and the Holy Spirit has been ignored, largely speaking, in the majority of the church. How rude to ignore the third Person of the blessed Trinity! I heard Rebecca Manley Pippert say: 'Today in evangelicalism we worship the Father, the Son, and the Holy Scriptures'.

A flame will go out when it is no longer tended. Paul told Timothy: 'Stir up the gift of God that is in you' - you've got to stir it up. A flame will go out when it is overwhelmed, when it's overwhelmed by something else. We see this early in church history, tradition and ecclesiastical hierarchy came in very early and substituted the work of the Spirit in guiding and leading and ministering in the church. Even doctrine came in, doctrine divorced from power, the word without the Spirit, and it's death! One of the greatest ways to quench the Spirit is unbelief, and maybe some of you are here tonight and you don't believe that there is anything other than what you have experienced, or over and above your tradition. Oh my friend, there is, there is - and it is life as God intended for His people!

Let me finish with this story. A man who had experienced the infilling of the Holy Spirit, constant fullness, was teaching on this subject and a clergyman at the meeting asked him a question: 'Are you telling us that you have the truth and we do not?'. The man was stumped, and he thought for a moment and he said: 'No, I do not say that', and he thought about how he was going to explain the difference between individuals and churches who are operating in the fullness of the power of the Spirit and those who are not, those who are in the flesh, or in tradition or something else. Suddenly he found himself thinking about an appliance he and his wife had bought when they moved to their Dallas home. This is how he explained, he said: 'We both have the truth', that's what he said to the clergyman, 'We both have the truth'. He went on: 'You know, when my wife and I moved to America we bought a marvellous device called a deep freeze, and there we keep some rather fine Texas beef. Now my wife can take one of those steaks out and lay it frozen solid on the table, and it's a steak alright, no question of that. You and I can sit around and analyse it, we can discuss the lineage, it's age, what part of the steer it comes from, we can weigh it and list its nutritive values. But if my wife puts that steak on the fire, something different begins to happen. My little boy smells it away out in the yard, and comes shouting, 'Wow, Mum, that smells good, I want some!'. Gentlemen', the preacher said, 'that is the difference between our ways of handling the same truth: you have yours on ice, ours is on fire'.

'Tis fire we want, for fire we plead,
The fire will meet our every need,
Send the fire!'

Do you have the fire of the Holy Spirit as God intended for His people? Let's take a moment, I know you've given me great liberty in the time you've allowed me to preach - but I want you not to rush at this moment. I remember hearing the late Duncan Campbell on a tape-recording saying about Elijah calling down fire from heaven on Mount Carmel, that he imagined that perhaps it may have been possible that after the sacrifice had been laid on the altar and arranged, that there might have just been a little bit of that sacrificial animal just not quite on the altar. Supposition I know, but it's an interesting thought, that he said, perhaps, when it was just lifted on, that little bit

lifted on to the altar, that then the fire fell. What is it tonight in your life that's not on the altar? Maybe you were once all on the altar, but something has slipped off and you've lost your fire? Will you come tonight, not only come and put yourself on the altar, but claim the fire, claim it - and ask the Lord to witness it in your heart tonight, and be filled with the Holy Spirit. That is what God intended for you.

Father, we just pray that You will do what no preacher, or organisation, or hymn, or church can do, and fill vessels here tonight to overflowing with the Holy Spirit of the Living God, for the glory of Jesus alone we pray. Amen.

Transcribed by Andrew Watkins, Preach The Word - November 2011
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Life As God Intends For His People - Chapter 3

"Life Of Grace Not Law"

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by David Legge

Well, thank you very much to the men, and good evening to you all. It's good to be here again in Ballymoney, and it's starting to feel like home now! These last three nights here, I'm getting used to the road down from Portadown, or up from Portadown - and it's good to be here with you again tonight, especially if it's your first time. I know some of you are here for the first time tonight, some friends as well especially welcome, it's good to see you. We've started a series on Sunday evening entitled 'Life As God Intends For His People'. We started on Sunday night on the subject 'Life Eternal', and last night we looked at 'Life Empowered By The Spirit' - the Spirit's empowerment and fullness, and the fruit of the Spirit that is meant to be in the believer's life. As has already been said, these are recorded, and also what is available for you if you wish is a booklet form of all this series - and that is possible, not because I'm meticulous in my notes, but because the chap who puts my messages on the Internet, he not only records them in audio, but he transcribes them word for word - Andrew Watkins is his name. He is a gift from God to me, I can tell you that, and the Lord has used him mightily - but he's going to transcribe these messages, so if you're fed up listening to me, you can read. The brilliant thing is you can put it down when you're fed up - you see, you can't do that tonight! You can put it down and have a cup of tea and then come back to it, or read over it again even - so do take one of those sheets, and put down whatever you want to order.

We're looking tonight at a 'Life Of Grace Not Law' - it's following on really from what we talked about last night, about life in the Spirit, and because of that we're going to turn to the book of Galatians again, where we were last evening, and chapter 3. The same verses we read last night, but we'll be dipping into the rest of the book again, and also throughout the scriptures on this subject of the 'Life As God Intends For His People' is to be a 'Life Of Grace Not Law'. So we'll read verses 1 through to verse 3: *"O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified? This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?"*.

Let's pray together - and as I've invited you on previous nights, I do again, to come to the Lord and ask Him to speak to you. We're here to meet with God, I hope that's why you're here, and we want to hear His voice. So let's come and say: 'Lord, if You've something to say to me tonight, speak to me' - and I believe He will. So let us pray together: Father, we thank You for Your holy word. We thank You for the scriptures, we thank You that they are God-breathed. We thank You for the power that is inherent within them, and yet, Lord, we don't want to preach upon them devoid of power. We laboured last evening on the necessity of that endowment of power from on high, the promise of the Father. Lord, we would ask for that unction to function in the power and demonstration of the Holy Ghost. We want to preach the word tonight with the power of God, the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven. We want the truth to be illuminated to

men and women's hearts by the power of the Holy Spirit - that's something that the preacher cannot do, and, Lord, I pray that the Holy Ghost will shine upon the truth, and will ignite it and fire it like a flaming arrow into the hearts and the souls of Your people here. And should there be any who find themselves in their pseudo-Christian experience weighed down by burdens of law, that You will liberate them tonight, Lord, that You will deliver them, and lift from off them the burden; that they might take upon them the yoke of Christ, which is easy and light. So, Lord, we ask for Your help in this regard. Come now and meet with us we pray, in Jesus' name, Amen.

In 2002 George Barna, you may have heard of him, he is the head of a research group in the United States who take various polls on various subjects. He took a poll of Christians nationwide in the United States of America to find out how widespread legalism was in the American church. If you don't know what legalism is, you'll know by the end of this message. One in six of the survey statements was this: 'The Christian life is well summed up as trying to do what God commands'. Then there was this question: 'How would you respond to that statement?'. I wonder how you would respond to that yourself? Listen to it again: 'The Christian life is well summed up as trying to do what God commands'. How would you respond? Well, if you agree and say, 'Well, that sort of sums it up for me', you would be among the majority of 57% polled who strongly agreed that, yes, the Christian life is summed up as trying to do what God commands. 25% somewhat agreed, they weren't 100% sure, but they thought that was probably a good summarisation. So if you put those two figures together, in total about 82% agreed in a roundabout way that the Christian life is well summed up as trying to do what God commands. The only problem with such a summary of the Christian life is that it is absolutely wrong!

Now that may be a shock to some of you here tonight, but the reason why that statement is wrong is that it is performance-based. The Christian life is not performance-based. Most of you dear evangelical folk will be well versed in Ephesians 2:8-9: 'By grace are you saved through faith' - that is the cardinal principle of Christianity - 'it's not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast'. How are we saved? By grace through faith - but a truth that so often is missed, particularly by evangelicals, is: the way we begin is the way we ought to continue - by grace through faith. That was the thing that the Galatians needed to get a hold of, look at verse 3 of chapter 3 - we were there for quite a considerable time last night, but it's worth looking at again - 'Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?'. On Sunday night we looked at how we commence this 'Life Eternal', by the new birth, by receiving Christ and being born-again, born from above, born by the Spirit. Paul is coming to these Galatians, who were well schooled with this elementary doctrine, and says: 'What has happened to you? Who has bewitched you? Somebody has cast a spell on you! Christ was crucified, as if in your midst, you knew that it was by the blood, by God's free gift of salvation and receiving what God has provided through the hand of grace by your hand of faith - what has happened to you? You started in the Spirit, and now you think you can be perfected in the flesh!'.

If you're here tonight, and your Christianity is characterised more by rules than relationship, you've got the wrong end of the stick. That is certainly not life as God intended for His people! If your Christianity is characterised more by performance than dependence, you've got it wrong, because Christianity - from start to finish - is all about by grace through faith. You see, when our emphasis becomes 'dos and don'ts',

rather than pursuing an intimate relationship, a personal faith-based relationship with God, we've got it wrong and we are in great danger of straying into areas, like the Galatians, where we can become bewitched, fall into a trance under the spell of some other spirit or other force - namely legalism.

Here's a better definition of true Bible Christianity than the one that George Barna asked, here it is: 'Christianity is a personal faith-based relationship with God the Father, through abiding in His Son Jesus Christ, and walking in loving obedience to His word through the person and power of the Holy Spirit'. Can I repeat that for you if you're taking notes? Christianity is a personal faith-based relationship with God the Father, through abiding in His Son Jesus Christ, and walking in loving obedience to His word through the person and power of the Holy Spirit. You see, this is where the Judaisers had gone wrong. We talked last night that these false teachers had come into Galatia to these Gentile Christians, and the Judaisers - as their name would indicate - were Jews who claimed to follow Christ, and basically they were saying: 'Yes, it's through the cross of Jesus that our sins can be paid for, but it's not enough. You must also adhere to the laws of Moses, the rites and the rituals, the ceremonies of Judaism, circumcision and all, and you Gentiles must live like Jews. Yes, Jesus died for your sins, but in order to be truly saved and know you're saved for sure, you've got to obey the law'.

In fact, what they were saying was: 'To receive God's promise to Abraham' - who was the first Jew - 'you must become a Jew'. So what they were saying was: it's Christ plus - there's a lot of isms and cults and sects today saying this, isn't there? Christ plus, and they were saying 'Christ plus Moses', or 'Christ plus legalistic requirements'. They were effectively preaching that what Christ has begun at Calvary, Moses must complete and perfect. One translation of chapter 2 of Galatians verse 4 goes like this: 'This matter arose because some false believers had infiltrated our ranks to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus, and to make us slaves' - to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus, and to make us slaves! Beware of anyone, or any organisation, or any sect, that tries to make slaves of you, and tries to rob you of the freedom that you have in Christ.

I love chapter 5 and verse 1, and one rendering is this: 'It is for freedom that Christ has made us free, therefore be no longer ensnared with a yoke of bondage'. Can I ask you tonight, Christian, are you free? It's not a designation, by the way, of your denomination! Are you free in the Spirit, or under the law? This was a serious problem, in chapter 1 and chapter 2 Paul argues that this concept of these false teachers was actually undermining the very essence of the gospel of grace. He tells them in chapter 1: 'This is another gospel, and you're not to listen to it, it's anathema, it's accursed - because it's not the true gospel of grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone!'. You see, the Gospel is 'by grace through faith plus nothing', that's what Paul is saying. It's through the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, His resurrection, and faith alone in that plus nothing - and he says that in verse 21 of chapter 2: 'I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain'. What is the cross all about if we could get there on our own steam?

So the central issue in this book, and indeed the central issue in the Christian life, is the basis of our acceptance with God. Is it on the basis of our performance, or is it on the basis of God's grace? Is it by grace, or is it through law? Now, not only did Paul indicate that this false doctrine affected the Gospel that these folk were preaching, but

it also - and this is the crucial thing for us tonight - it affected the level at which they tried, and 'try' is the imperative word, the level at which they tried to live their Christian lives, because they sought sanctification at a performance level. They tried to be holy by obeying the law.

Now good evangelical folk understand that salvation cannot be achieved by performance. You would be the first one to sit down with your New Testament and tell a person that says. 'Well, I go to my church, and I say my prayers, and I give in to charity, and I have been through sacraments' and all sorts - you would be the first to say, 'No, no, no, it's not by works, it is by grace'. We know that salvation is by grace, but are we guilty - and I think many are - of trying to achieve holiness and sanctification by performance. In the same regard, equally it is not Christ plus our effort in order to be sanctified. In verses 1, 2 and 3 of chapter 3 that we read together Paul is saying: 'Christ was crucified before your eyes, portrayed as such. This only I want to learn from you', verse 2, 'Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?'. How were you saved? It was by faith, and by the power of the Spirit in response to your faith.

Now, let me ask you tonight: how are you living your 'Christian life'? Are you trying to do what God commands, or, you know, a lot of poor folk in Ulster are trying to do what somebody else commands - it wasn't God, but it was their interpretation of something that God may or may not have said, and they're living under this bondage of a list of rules that has been enforced upon them, and it's not from God at all. Or are you living, what we said, a personal faith-based relationship with God as your Abba Father, through abiding in His Son the Saviour, Jesus Christ, and lovingly obeying God's word - but not in the flesh, or through laws - but through the person and power of the Holy Spirit. You see what we're talking about here tonight is not 'doing' but 'being' - that's what Christianity is. Being! This life that God has deposited within us, allowing that life to come forth! Now we have responsibility, of course, and there are things to be done - look at verse 20 of chapter 2: 'I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me' - but it is 'being' in the sense that we are not letting ourselves 'be' and live our selfish lives, but we are letting God 'be', through the Spirit, living the life of Christ in us by faith... that's crucial, by faith not by works.

I said to you last night that it is futile to try and live the Christian life, because it is an utterly impossible life to live - and that's a big let-down for a lot of folk, but it is utterly impossible. As Roy Hession said in his little book 'The Calvary Road': 'The only life that pleases God is the life of His Son' - 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased'. So that's the life you've got to live, but you can't live it - well, you can't live it of yourself. What you got to do is die, and let the Holy Spirit live that life through you. It can never be achieved by law, it's only the life in the Spirit, the crucified life, that is the starting point of all sanctification - and if that's not your sanctification, it's of the flesh.

Also I have to say, and this isn't my subject tonight, but: if we think that we must perform to gain acceptance with God, do you know what the knock-on effect of that is? We then require others to perform to gain acceptance with us. If they don't measure up to our standard, we brush them off as unworthy. But you see when you realise that you're accepted by grace in God's sight, you can accept anybody that names the name

of Christ by grace. In chapter 5 on we see that, but we'll not look at it tonight - we want to be as practical as possible. A 'Life Of Grace Not Law', another title that I could give this message tonight is: 'The How Of Holiness'. Now let me say before I start - well, I did start a wee while ago - if you're warm, get your coat off, I'll not tell you to undo your tie, but maybe you don't even have a tie - it doesn't matter, but get cool, I don't want anybody falling asleep. Maybe we need to open a door or two - I'm warm up here, if you're not warm down there that's OK, but it's very warm up here. I want everybody to be able to concentrate: 'The How Of Holiness'. How is it done? You want to be holy, you want to be pure, you want to be sanctified, but how?

Chapter 3 verses 1 to 9 teaches us that salvation and sanctification are a work of the Spirit, received by faith, not achieved by works. Do I need to repeat that? Salvation and sanctification are a work of the Spirit, therefore not of the flesh or of law, received by faith and not achieved by works. Now, Paul argues this in three ways. He argues it from the present, and he says: 'Presently this is how things are working among you Galatians', verse 5, 'Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, does He do it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?'. Now, miracles were being performed in the midst of the Christians in Galatia, and Paul is saying: 'Well, did you work those miracles up by keeping the law and by the power of the flesh?'. Of course you didn't! Presently, he is saying, these miraculous signs going on in your midst are worked by the Spirit in response to your faith. So presently the case is that it is the work of the Spirit through faith that is manifesting miracles - but also it was the case previously, not just presently but previously.

In verse 6 we read this: 'Just as Abraham 'believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness''. Previously Abraham believed, and God credited his faith toward Him as righteousness. I read an article recently that likened God crediting Abraham's faith as righteousness to some of the coupons that you get in your weekly paper, the free paper that goes around the doors, I'm sure you have one around here. Maybe you get a little coupon that entitles you to a bag of sugar, or a box of teabags or something like that. You may not have the money - I know you're all poor around these parts! - for a bag of sugar, or a box of teabags, but if you didn't have the money you could take the coupon, and you can cash the coupon in as the equivalent. You have the price, but you can cash this coupon in, and you are credited the goods - that's what faith did for Abraham, that's what faith does for us. We cannot achieve God's righteous standard, but when we exercise faith, as Abraham did in the past, it was credited to him as God's righteousness. Isn't that marvellous?

But what Paul is saying is: 'Look, presently miracles are working in your midst, and it's by the Spirit through your act of faith. Abraham in the past, previously, acted in faith toward God, and was credited God's righteousness'. Then he moves on, and he speaks prophetically in verses 7 through to 9, that the children of Abraham are all who believe - whether Jews are Gentiles - all who have faith in God. Verse 7: 'Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, 'In you all the nations shall be blessed'. So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham'. The physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, of course, are the Jewish people - but the spiritual descendants of Abraham are the sons and daughters of faith and not works. Now this shattered the Jew's false confidence in their physical ancestry. You remember the Lord Jesus in Matthew chapter 3, He had to say to them: 'Do not think to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our

father'. For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones'. You see they had got lost in their spiritual inheritance.

Jesus, in fact, said in John 8: 'You are of your father the devil'. 'Don't be proud about Abraham as your patriarch, you're of your father the devil, and the works of your father you will do - he was a murderer from the beginning'. You remember a crowd of Jews came to the Lord Jesus in John 6, we touched on it on Sunday night, and they said: 'What must we do that we might work the works of God?', and Jesus says, 'This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom God has sent'. He saying: 'This is the thing to do: have faith!'. You see, the promise, as verse 16 says here, was not to Abraham's seeds - although there are promises, I believe, to the Jews - but the promise was to Abraham's Seed. Verse 16: 'Now to Abraham and his Seed', singular, 'were the promises made. He does not say, 'And to seeds'', plural, 'as of many, but as of one, 'And to your Seed', who is Christ'. Abraham received the promise to his offspring, his Seed, singular - that's Jesus! These promises are fulfilled in Christ, not in Moses. Look at verse 17: 'And this I say, that the law, which was four hundred and thirty years later', than the promises given to Abraham, the Mosaic law was 430 years later, this law, this new covenant of Moses 'cannot annul the covenant that was confirmed before by God in Christ', to Abraham, 'that it should make the promise of no effect'.

Therefore it is claimed by faith in Christ, and not by the works of Moses - verse 18: 'For if the inheritance is of the law', the law of Moses, 'it is no longer of promise; but God gave it to Abraham', 430 years before the Mosaic law it was given to Abraham 'by promise'. You see? We are saved by grace through faith, but we are sanctified by grace through faith, not by the law - certainly not by the law of Moses.

Now we also see, and this is the second point for you to jot down if you're taking notes, in verses 10 to 14: the righteous shall live by their faith, not by works. The righteous shall live by their faith, not by works. Look at verse 11: 'But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for', quoting Habakkuk, "the just shall live by faith". You see, you can't live by the law - that's very important. If you look here at verse 10, the first half of it, Paul says: 'For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse'. The righteous must live by faith, because to live by law brings a curse. You don't have to look too far to find this out, because when you look at particularly religious people who have a code of ethics, a standard that they're trying to achieve, well - like any standard - once you set the bar, you're aiming for it, but you always get disappointed, especially in a religious capacity because none of us are perfect and we always, but always, fall short of the bar. Even if the bar is the law of Moses, none of us, for all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, we have missed the mark, there's no difference - and so, if we take the law of Moses as our standard of acceptance with God, we will always be miserable, because we will always fail! It brings a curse.

In fact, you see this really illustrated well in chapter 4 and verse 15, look at it, Paul says: 'What then was the blessing you enjoyed?', that's translated in another translation, 'What has happened to all your joy?'. Where has your joy gone? Do you know where their joy had gone? They once had great joy because they were revelling in the wonder of salvation by grace, a free gift, just accepted by simple child-like faith, and being sanctified in Christ, and all the blessings of God 'Yes and Amen' in Him - and they were just over the moon about it, and then these old pharisaical Judaisers came

in and said: 'Ah, but hold on, you haven't achieved yet. You're not holy yet. Boy, you need to keep the law, you need to become Jews'. All of a sudden these burdens were laid on them, and they lost their joy and they became miserable

Now, I'll not ask are there any miserable Christians in the meeting tonight! I'm sure there's one or two! You certainly will be miserable if you're under the curse of the law. The great tragedy is: trying to connect with God on the level of performance always ends up in disappointment, because that is the one place that God cannot be found. This is a widespread problem. Have you ever said to yourself as a Christian: 'I just can't try any more'. Did you feel like throwing in the towel? You don't feel like you measure up to this standard, whatever that standard is. Maybe it's a standard of others, and you can't rise above other's expectations of you - and because of that you're striving, and you're struggling, and you're wrestling. You've lost your peace! You once had it, but it's gone! You've lost your joy, and maybe even lost your security in Christ because you're looking to yourself, or you're looking outside of yourself to a list of rules, rather than looking to Jesus and Him alone.

You see, there's a curse with the law. S. Lewis Johnson, the great Bible expositor, put it like this, he said: 'Legalism wrenches the joy of the Lord from the Christian believer, and with the joy of the Lord goes His power for vital worship and vibrant service. Nothing is left but cramped, sombre, dull, and listless profession. The truth is betrayed, and the glorious name of the Lord becomes a synonym for a gloomy killjoy'. Do you think Christianity has ever been perceived in that way? A gloomy killjoy? 'The Christian under law', he goes on to say, 'is a miserable parody of the real thing'. It's not the real thing, my friend! It's not life in the Spirit, it's not life as God intended! It brings shame and guilt, and it is in the arsenal of the legalist to use shame and guilt if you don't measure up to their particular standard. Perhaps the greatest danger of legalism is that it turns people away from grace and the joyful freedom that is in Christ.

Do you remember what the Lord said in Matthew 23:13: 'Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in'. Legalists block God's people from the way of freedom. They block the joy and the peace by making the Christian life a cumbersome journey of religious performance. In fact, the Lord in that same chapter, Matthew 23, said in verse 4: 'These Pharisees bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers'. A paraphrase of that verse goes like this: 'They crush people with unbearable religious demands, and never lift a finger to ease the burden'. I wonder has that been your experience of Christianity? Can I tell you something: that ain't Christianity! That's the curse of the law!

To live by the works of the law brings a curse, but verse 10, the second part of it, in chapter 3 shows us that it also demands perfection: 'Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them'. It demands perfection, verse 12: 'Yet the law is not of faith, but 'the man who does them shall live by them'', or 'must live by them'. You see, perfectionism is the fruit of legalism - you've got to be perfect! I heard someone say: 'Jesus was perfect, but He was not a perfectionist'. You need to think about that one. In other words, He did not require perfection on the behalf of His followers, His disciples and the people who were in the gutter who He touched and healed and restored and forgave. You might say: 'But hold

on, in Matthew 5:48, that the Lord not say, 'Be perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect?'. Yes, He did, but if you think, by any means, that He was meaning, 'You disciples need to pull your socks up and be like God', that's not what He meant. He meant that they needed to die to themselves, this was an unattainable goal in the flesh without death to themselves and life in the Spirit. They were on that journey, and maybe you're on it to - to realise that, 'In my flesh dwells no good thing'.

Maybe you're a perfectionist, a Christian one, and it's putting your head away? It will do, and you'll put everybody else's heads away as well! Richard Walters said: 'People who must think and act without flaw, punishing themselves when they don't meet the unattainable goal, they leave behind them a trail of frustration. They remember the past with regret, and don't enjoy the present as much as they might - and usually they dread the future, and it's likely that they make those around them miserable like themselves'.

Living by the works of the law brings a curse, it demands perfection, it is impossible, and thirdly: it doesn't justify. That's the biggest reason to leave legalism alone: it doesn't justify, because it's weak through the flesh. In Romans 8, that wonderful purple passage, we read: 'There is now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus'. We're not condemned by anyone, because we're not condemned by God. We're not attaining to any law of the flesh, but the law of life in Christ Jesus has set us free from the law of sin and death. The reason why the law could not do this righteousness for us is, and this is what he says in verse 3 of Romans 8: 'The law was weak through the flesh'. There's nothing wrong with God's law, it's perfect - the problem is us. We have a bias towards sin. The law is weak through the flesh, so it can't justify us.

Here's another thing: it was never intended to justify us. The law of Moses was not given for that purpose. Look at verse 21 of chapter 3: 'Is the law then against the promises of God?' - you might be saying that. Is there a contradiction here in what you're saying? 'Certainly not! For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law'. Do you see what he's saying? If there had been a law that we could achieve righteousness, well then we could get righteousness by the law - but there isn't one. Verse 22: 'But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor'.

The law was never intended to justify us - and, in fact, not only is it weak through the flesh, and it couldn't justify us, but here's the biggest reason of all why not to live under law: it's what Christ has redeemed us from. Why would any blood-bought child of God want to live under what Christ redeemed us from? Look at the verse I'm getting at here, verses 13 and 14 of chapter 3: 'Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree'), that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith'. You can read about it in verse 26 to the end of the chapter. Understand the purpose for which the law of Moses was given - why was it given? Verse 24: 'a schoolmaster', 'a tutor' to instruct us and get us ready for Christ, to show us our bondage to sin - that's why the law was given! Like a magnifying glass to magnify our sin in our eyes, so that we might know that we

need a Saviour!

In fact, if you look at chapter 4 and read on from verse 8, you see that the law enflames sin. It increases sin, that's what Paul says in Romans as well - and so, to turn to the law from Christ is to return to, Paul says here, 'the weak and worthless elementary principles of the world'. He says here in chapter 4 it is to become slaves again, to come under bondage from which Christ set us free. Verse 10 of chapter 4 says you can observe days, and months, and seasons, and years, you can be enslaved to religious ritual and rites - but you're not meant to be slaves, he says in chapter 4, you're meant to be sons!

What's the effect that all this has on you? This is chapter 4, remember what I said, verse 15 the rendering: 'What then was the blessing you enjoyed? What has happened to all your joy?'. In fact, he says here in verse 16, at the end of verse 15: 'I bear you witness that, if possible, you would have plucked out your own eyes and given them to me. Have I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth?'. Paul probably had a problem with his eyesight, and they were such gracious, loving, joyous people that they would have plucked their very good eyes out and given them to Paul to replace his bad - but something had taken away their vitality, their spiritual oomph, joy, and ecstasy. Do you know what it was? Law.

I'm going to tell you something, and this might be a revelation to you. Listen to this statement, listen: you become like the God you worship - that's profound. We could look at various religions in our world today, and see how their conception of God has led them to be very wicked, and callous, and hateful. It's exactly the same here: you become like the God you worship. In chapter 4 verses 4 to 7, he says we are not slaves, but we are sons by the adoption through Christ's redemption. Verse 6: 'And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, 'Abba, Father!' - the Spirit of Jesus in us crying out 'Abba, Father!'. We are meant to have a Father-child relationship with God Almighty, not a relationship of an Employer with a slave.

I think the prodigal son is the best illustration of this in the book. Turn with me to Luke chapter 15. You remember the story, I hope you know that he took an inheritance from his father that wasn't due to him until his father had died - so it was as if he was saying, 'I wish you were dead, so that I could get my hands on your money'. His father gave it to him, and he went into the far country and he wasted it with riotous, prodigal living. He eventually can't even get fed with the pig swill of the farmer's pigs that he has been feeding, he can't even feed his belly on them - and he realises that there is bread in his father's house, and that to spare. He comes to his senses, and then he says: 'This is what I'm going to do', verse 18, 'I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants''. Now, you see what's going on here: he had messed up, he had blotted his copybook. He was a son, but he had now sinned big-time - and he thought: 'I could never come back to my father just as a son, if he even accepts me back it will have to be on the level of a slave, I will have to earn my keep from here on in'.

I love this, because we see the father in this parable. This parable is not about the son, it's about the father. First I want you to see, when he asked for his inheritance the father didn't pummel him into submission - that's interesting. He let him go, and the

Father lets us go when we make certain choices. But what I want you to see is: he spots the son a great way off. The son starts returning, you know the story, verse 20: 'He arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him'. Now let me ask you a question: how did his father see him a great way off? The only explanation I can give - I don't know whether it's right or not - he must have been watching. Does that make sense to you? He must have been watching from a high height, maybe the rooftop, to see him a great way off - but how did he know he was coming that day? Well, he didn't, so I think he must have been watching every day. Do you see the father's heart?

Then, when the father spots him still a great way off, he races down the stairs at the side of the house, and he shouts instructions to his servants to get a big feast ready. He stumbles - in those days the men wore the skirts - he probably would have had to gather his skirts and run towards the boy he had longed to embrace for so long. Now this is what I want you to see, look down here at verse 21. The son had been practising his spiel, hadn't he? The son said to him - the father embraces him and has compassion and kisses him on the neck - 'Father', here he goes, the spiel, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son', but where does it stop? 'But the father said to his servants...'. What did he plan to say? He planned to say 'Make me as one of your hired servants' - but father interrupts him. I don't know of anywhere else in Scripture where there is a picture of God interrupting anybody, but he interrupts him here. He says: 'Bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. And bring the fatted calf here and kill it, and let us eat and be merry; for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found'. And they began to be merry' - that's wonderful!

Can I ask you: do you relate to God as a son or a daughter to a Father, or as a slave to a bondmaster? That's a real diagnostic question as to whether you are living under grace or under law: do you know God as your Abba Father? Oh, I love that name, there is so much wrapped up in it. A little Jewish boy, when his daddy got home from work, would run down the hall to the front door and wave his arms for daddy to lift him, and he would cry: 'Abba! Abba! Abba! Abba!'. This was the intimate, affectionate name that a wee toddler would have for his daddy. Now don't misunderstand what I'm saying here, I'm not saying we should be overfamiliar with God, or irreverent with God - and I'm not advocating calling God 'Daddy'. But what I am saying is: we ought to experience this intimacy of God as our Abba Father. Sometimes the reaction to talk like this is: 'That's too familiar', or 'That's irreverent' - and that's because you've never known it.

One of the greatest revelations I ever had was to sit in an armchair with my open Bible, and just say 'Abba, Abba, Abba Father' - to know the Spirit of God's Son rising up within my heart, crying 'Abba, Father'. John White says: 'It's a carnal sort of dignity that must go', that says we can't call God 'Abba', 'and a humble trust that is added instead. When you know Him as 'Abba', your faith will be simpler and clearer, your prayers at once reverent, intimate and informed'. Do you know who you are in Christ? Do you know who you are in Christ, that you're accepted in the well-beloved, that God is your Abba Father? You see, what legalism does is it distorts God and it turns Him into a cruel despot, and a harsh legislator, that we're all shaking in our boots. Now don't, please, misquote me. I believe in the fear of God, but it's not that type of

terrified fear - perfect love casts out all fear. It's a reverential fear, and in fact scholars tell us that the concept of fear in the Old Testament can be understood directly as the concept of faith in the New Testament.

Not only have legalists given us a warped view of God as our Father - I'm almost finished, hang in there - but sometimes our earthly fathers have given us a wrong concept of Heavenly Father. Do you remember on, was it Sunday night, I talked about how earthly relationships are meant to be signposts toward heavenly ones - and sometimes we stop at the signposts and just enjoy the earthly ones, when they are meant to point us to God. Well, our earthly fathers were meant to point us to Heavenly Father - but maybe you, tonight, had an absent father, or a father that was too busy for you, or distant and disinterested. You see, what happens is: when you say 'Father' then to you, you don't have a lovely warm gushy feeling in your soul. Maybe you recoil at the memories of what your father was like, and you superimpose that concept on God as your Father, and you don't have that warmth or that drawing. Maybe your father was insensitive, uncaring, a demanding taskmaster, passive and cold, never satisfied with what you ever achieved. Maybe he was impatient, or angry, mean or cruel. Maybe he was even abusive. Maybe you saw him, as a kid or a teenager, as trying to take all the fun out of life; he was controlling and manipulative, condemning, unforgiving, nitpicking - and you find it hard to think of God as anything else. I honestly believe many evangelicals are like this.

Do you want to know what Abba Father in heaven is like? Do you want to know what your Father in heaven is like? Look at Jesus. 'Philip', He said: 'Have I been so long time with you, and when you see Me do you not see the Father?'. Everything that Jesus is, that is the Father's heart to us. You're saying: 'Oh I want, I would love such an intimate relationship with Abba Father'. Listen, this is God's word: you have it! You have it! It has been bought by the precious blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, and by faith in salvation you have entered into it - but you must, by faith, take it and believe it and enjoy it! You'll never enjoy it if you insist on living by law. You'll live like a slave, but you've got to live like a son or a daughter - by grace through faith.

In the US Civil War over the issue of slavery Charles Sumner, on November 5, 1864, drew the battle lines between the two warring sides and declared, listen: 'Where slavery is, there liberty cannot be. Where liberty is, there slavery cannot be' - that is the message of Galatians, and that is life as God intends for His people, for you. This is the how of holiness - do you know how holiness is achieved? It's not by putting all these legalistic boundaries around you - listen carefully, this might be one of the most important statements you'll ever hear in your life, it certainly was for me: what you do - D-O - what you do does not determine who you are; who you are in Christ, by grace through faith, determines what you do. That's why Paul is at pains in the book of Ephesians, for the first three chapters, to argue: 'This is who you are in Christ, in heavenly places', and that's why verse 1 of chapter 4 is: 'Now walk worthy of the calling wherewith you are called'.

What you do does not determine who you are. We're not trying to achieve acceptance with God, but we're trying, by grace through faith in Christ, to live out what He has deposited in us by the Holy Spirit. You see, holiness is not based on performance - but as we've said right from Sunday night, it's based, like the whole Christian life, on relationship - a law of love. Do you know what Augustine said about holiness? This might shock some of you, he said: 'Love God, and do what you like'. Do what you like?

Aye, do what you like - because if you truly love God with all your soul, with all your heart, with all your mind, with all your strength, what you do is what God will love. That's the law of love, the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus that sets us free from the law of rules and regulations.

Paul quoted Habakkuk, chapter 3 and verse 11: 'The just shall live by faith'. It's quoted three times in the New Testament, it's quoted in the book of Romans, and the emphasis is on the first two words 'The just' - how to be made right with *God* - '*The just shall live by faith*'. It's then quoted in the book of Hebrews, and the emphasis is on the last two words, that great book of faith, '*The just shall live by faith*'. But it's quoted here in Galatians, and the emphasis is on the middle two words, '*The just shall live by faith*'. You cannot live by law, you will die. You only live by faith.

Can I ask you tonight - I'm not asking what denomination you are, I'm not asking what you believe about A-B-C - I'm asking you this, listen: do you have a personal faith-based relationship with Abba Father, through abiding in Jesus Christ His Saviour Son, through obedience to His word by the power and the person of the Holy Spirit? For that's the life that God intended for you.

Transcribed by Andrew Watkins, Preach The Word - November 2011
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Life As God Intends For His People - Chapter 4

"Life Of Hearing God"

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by David Legge

Well, good evening to you all, it's good to be back again - thank you to John for the singing once more, I appreciated that piece. Thank you all for turning out, it's good when people come back - it's never worse for the preacher than when nobody comes back to hear him after the first night! But some of you have come back after the first, and the second evening, and some of you have been here every night which we do appreciate. May the Lord bless you, and we do trust that He has been blessing you in these days. He has certainly been blessing me through the word, through delivering it, and having fellowship with you dear folk. I do trust that that will be our portion the rest of the week.

Now, if you have been with us, maybe I should examine you? What did we do on Sunday night, if you were here? 'Life Eternal', that's right, and how that's the life that we have to live - and it's God's life that He has put in us. Then Monday night? 'Life Empowered By The Spirit', yes. Last night? A 'Life Of Grace Not Law' - well, some of you were here! That's good! You didn't all fall asleep! Well, tonight it's 'Life Of Hearing God', or hearing from God. So we're turning tonight just for one verse, although we will be looking at a lot of Scriptures throughout the message, just one verse from John chapter 10. Some of you hardly even need to turn to it, I'm sure, John 10 verse 27, the words of our Lord Jesus. John 10:27, Jesus said: *"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me"*.

Let us pray. I've been asking you these nights to come to the Lord now, come with your heart, and say: 'Lord, speak to me'. I hope He has been speaking in these nights, I believe He's going to speak tonight, and He's going to reveal truths, perhaps, that you have never seen. You have perhaps grown up in evangelicalism, for want of a better phrase, but you have never understood what it is to hear the voice of God. So let us come and say: 'Lord, I want to learn to hear You'. Let's pray.

Father, we thank You for Your holy word. We thank You for everything that it teaches us, and it is indeed the revelation of Yourself. We thank You for the Living Word, the Lord Jesus Christ. We thank You that He was manifested, 'We see His glory', the Apostles could say, 'the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth'. They said that they could touch and handle the Word of life - and, Lord, we thank You for their testimony. Lord, we want a deeper relationship ourselves with You, we want to experience You first-hand. We thank You for the witness of the Gospels, but we thank You for the witness of the Spirit. Lord, we pray tonight that all of us gathered here would have eyes to see, and hearts to perceive what the Spirit says to the church, what You're saying to us tonight, Lord.

'Speak, Lord, in the stillness
While we wait on Thee;
Hush our hearts to listen,
In expectancy.

Speak, O blessed Master,
In this quiet hour,
Let us see Thy face, Lord,
Feel Thy touch of power.

For the words Thou speakest,
They are life indeed;
Living Bread from Heaven,
Now my spirit feed!'

Give the help of the Holy Spirit that I need, Lord, and all of us together - for the glory of Christ we pray, Amen.

'Life As God Intends For His People' is a 'Life Of Hearing God', or hearing from God. The Lord Jesus Himself is very clear: 'My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me'. Now, the primary way that we hear the voice of God is from the revelation of the Scriptures, and we must always stand on that firm foundation. If we stray off it, we stray into the area of the cult or the false religion. When we pay attention to any form of revelation which supersedes or contradicts Holy Scripture, we're in big trouble. It has to be said that some elements of the Christian Church have disposed of the Bible in favour of some kind of subjective mysticism, a bit like New Age actually - and that has led them into all sorts of dangerous areas. Now, whatever God may say to us today, it will always be in line with what He has already said in His revealed word. He's not in the habit of contradicting Himself. Isaiah the prophet said in Isaiah chapter 8 and verse 20: 'To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them'.

So we're very clear that the word of God, the Bible, is the primary means of God's revelation to us, it's the main way that He speaks to us. Now, having said that, it is the written word of God that tells us that God is willing to speak to us in a variety of ways. The danger is, because God has given this complete and ultimate revelation of Himself in Scripture, that we conclude that God cannot or does not speak today. Francis Schaeffer, the great Bible teacher and Christian scholar, said: 'God is the God who is, and is not silent'. In other words, the God that we worship is a God who speaks today. In a sense, this is at the very core of life as God intends for His people, because from the very outset on Sunday evening we established that this eternal life that God gives us is more than just a ticket to heaven. Jesus defined it in John 17 verse 3: 'This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent'. We have seen that eternal life, and this salvation which we enjoy by grace through faith, ultimately can be summed up in a one word concept: relationship.

So, to hear from God is all about a relationship. We also use the term 'communion' - we have communion with the Lord. Can I say to you dear folk: that is more than reading your Bible and praying, even every day. 'Read your Bible and pray every day if you want to grow', there's a lot of truth there - but what we're talking about tonight is more than that. I believe what God intends for His people is more than that, because there's a lot of dear evangelical folk, and it's a battle for them to get even to the point of reading the Bible and praying every day - but they are not really getting through to God, and God doesn't seem to be getting through to them. They are not communing, there is not that interaction that there ought to be. It's one thing to read a book, but

it's quite another thing to know the Author. The hymn writer put it like this:

'Beyond the sacred page we seek Thee, Lord;
Our spirits pant for Thee, O living Word!'

Now this is a New Covenant principle in the Bible, that we hear from God. I want you to turn with me to Hebrews chapter 8 please, Hebrews chapter 8, and if you were to read from verse 8 you will find a quotation from the Old Testament, Jeremiah chapter 31; where God makes, through the prophet Jeremiah, the promise of a new covenant to the Jewish people. Here it is reiterated in the book of Hebrews, and applied to all who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as coming under the blessing of the promise of Abraham that we saw last evening, this promise of grace. Whilst it's made to the house of Judah and Israel, we are partakers by grace through faith in this new covenant. Now one of the aspects of it is in verse 11, look at what it says, read verse 10 to get the follow-through: 'For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people', that's the work of the Holy Spirit, to write the law of God on our hearts. That's what we said last night, we're not living by law, we cannot achieve the law, but the Holy Spirit in us can enable us to live a holy life by the power of grace through faith in the Spirit. But look at this, verse 11: 'None of them shall teach his neighbour, and none his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD', for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them'.

You see, Christianity is more than a mere set of beliefs, it is personal covenant with God through Jesus Christ which promises fellowship and communication with the Holy Spirit, who is the orchestrator of the New Covenant. You'll not need to teach your neighbour, 'Know the LORD', for all shall know Him, for we will all have this communion and fellowship of the Holy Ghost. But sadly, it has to be said, many Christians continue to substitute dead tradition or fleshly religiosity in place of this proceeding life in the Spirit. I wonder is that you tonight? Can I say to you, as I have come here this week, that I love to see people getting saved, I love to see Christians being built up - but my heart is really for those who have been sold a pup, for those who have not got the real thing, who are maybe saved and secure in an eternal sense, but you are not experiencing the wonder of all the ramifications of grace in your life. You're not having this true relationship, as we said last night, with God as your Abba Father, through abiding in Jesus Christ, His Son, and through loving obedience living by the power and person of the Holy Spirit.

This can be evident in our pulpits through preaching. There's plenty of preaching in Ulster even today, though things are going downward I'm sure you'll agree, there is still plenty of preaching of the word of God - more than perhaps anywhere in the Western world. But I have a question at times, and it's a question that many people are asking today even in our province: where would you go to meet God? Where would you go to hear from God? You might think that that's a ridiculous question, but you know it talks in the book of Amos about a famine in the word of God. You might say: 'Well, we could never say that about today in this day and age in which we live! Sure, even the Internet has proliferated the word of God to such an extent that you can have all the resources imaginable'. We praise God for that, but that's not what I'm talking about. When Amos talks about a famine of the word of God, he's not talking about a lack of Bibles, what he is talking about is the proceeding life, the word of God from his heart.

Now we in evangelicalism have all the clichés off pat about what we think we believe, for instance, Isaiah chapter 55 and verse 11: 'So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it'. There we say: 'Well, no matter what we preach from the word of God, no matter how many verses we quote, no matter how many Bibles are littering the country, the word of God always will return not being empty, but will fulfil the purpose that God has promised'. Well, that's not what the text says - and if you think about it reasonably and rationally, there's an awful lot of sowing of the word of God in our province, and very little reaping. I know there's the law of the harvest, but the harvest has got to come around sometime, hasn't it? I know God is a God of the harvest, but the verse says, let me read it to you again: 'So shall My word be that goes forth out of My mouth', that is speaking of the proceeding word of God.

Let me give you another example of it in Deuteronomy chapter 8 and verse 3, our Lord quoted it in His temptation, He said: 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every' - does it say 'every word of God'? Is that what it says? That's not what it says, that's the way we quote it, it says: 'by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God'. That's something different, I believe - the proceeding word of God is what is on the heart of God now, at this specific time, for a specific people. Now that's different than just quoting verses, or preaching sermons, there is a prophetic edge when we are speaking the word of God that is upon the heart of God for a given time for a specific people. That's what the preacher's responsibility is. You remember what Paul said 1 Corinthians 4:20: 'The kingdom of God is not in word but in power'. We revere the word of God, and we've already established that it is the foundation of God's revelation, but there is more than just preaching the word and quoting the word - there is the power of the Holy Spirit that is indispensable for Gospel ministry. Paul said in 1 Thessalonians 1 verse 5: 'Our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit'.

The problem today often is, and I include myself within this statement: preachers, like most Christians, are not hearing from God. They are preaching the word, but there is a famine in the proceeding word of God. There is a famine in what is on God's heart, the burden that God has for a specific people at a specific time. The reason is simple, Psalm 25 verse 14: 'The secret of the LORD is with those who fear Him, and He will show them His covenant'. You see, I believe in Bible instruction of course, whatever way you want to term it, even catechising, it's an important thing - but what we need today in our modern age is not more instruction, but more revelation, and there is a difference. You see, information about the Bible does not guarantee revelation of the Spirit. That's why we can have men and women with a lot of education, and very little unction. I don't despise education, but it's no substitute for the unction of the Holy Spirit.

The pew follows the pulpit, and we should not be surprised that, if our preachers are not hearing from God and communicating what is on God's heart, that the people in the pew aren't expecting to hear from God either. But the Bible is clear, as far as I can see, that life as God intends for His people is knowing God in more than just reading your Bible through in the year: 'My sheep hear My voice'. Are you hearing the voice of the Saviour? Let's face it, before the New Testament was formulated and published, did the early believers hear from God? Did they? Of course they did! Not only that, but

add to that the fact that even when the Bible was published and duplicated, most of the early believers couldn't read anyway. Do you think, from day-to-day, that they didn't hear from God? Of course they heard His voice, they had a communion with God that was deeper than just reading words off a page - even if those words are inspired. Thomas Manton, the puritan, put it like this: 'To serve God is one thing, but to seek Him is another - many hover around the palace, but few speak with the Prince'. Do you, Christian, know what it is to speak with the Prince? Do you know what it is to hear His voice?

I want to be very practical tonight. The first question I want to ask and seek to answer is: what does it mean to hear the voice of God? What does it mean? Now we've already established that we primarily hear the voice of God through the word, through the preaching of the word, particularly when it's in the power of the Spirit - and I think you can tell the difference. But also when you're reading the word in an individual sense, the Spirit can shine light upon the page and you can have a personal application of Scripture to a circumstance or situation in your life. Also, by the way, when you're reading the word consecutively and continuously, the word is being input, so that when the Holy Spirit sees fit He can bring an output - so that's a good reason to be reading the word, and feeding on the word, because what the Holy Spirit often does is He lifts something that we've maybe read and forgotten, and He applies it to a situation - but if we haven't put it in, He can't lift it out; not He can't, but generally He doesn't.

The Bible also says: 'The heavens declare the glory of God'. God communicates to us through creation. It also tells us that the expectations of God's law are written upon our hearts, which basically is the conscience. God can speak to us through our conscience. God also can speak to us through His providence in circumstances, where He closes doors, He opens doors. But Scripture also records - you know the characters and the incidents - where God spoke through visions, and through dreams, and in various supernatural ways. God even spoke with an audible voice. Now, when I'm speaking tonight about God speaking to us, and us hearing the voice of God, am I speaking about an audible voice? Well, can I tell you: I wouldn't dare limit God to not speaking with an audible voice. If He wants to speak with an audible voice, He will - but it's a very rare thing. Let me give you two reasons why it is quite rare to hear God with an audible voice. The first is: God speaks from His dwellingplace. You might say, 'Well, that's all the more reason for God to speak audibly from heaven', but that is not His dwellingplace now. Well, it is, the heaven of heavens is 'My dwelling' - but you, believer, listen: you have now, by grace through faith, become a Temple of the Holy Spirit. You are God's dwellingplace, so that now He can communicate internally with you, by the Holy Spirit, in your spirit. So, in a sense, you don't need Him to speak audibly, He can speak internally. A second reason why Him speaking audibly is rare is: speaking internally to us increases our faith and dependence upon God. You see, it takes an act of faith to listen and obey the Spirit's voice within. You know, if you hear a great booming voice, and it shakes the house, it takes less faith to act upon that than it does to act upon the still small voice within your heart.

That's often what we call this voice of God, the 'still small voice'. I'm sure you've heard it termed as such. It comes from 1 Kings chapter 19, let me remind you of the story, where Elijah fled from the wicked Queen Jezebel. He was at a real low ebb in his life and ministry, wishing he would die, and God came before him in His mighty presence. It says that God passed by him, and there were various accompanying phenomena. There was wind, there was fire, there was even an earthquake - but the Bible says that

the message of God did not come in any of those manifestations. Moments later, God chose to speak softly, in a peaceful way, and His message came through a still small voice - 1 Kings 19 verse 12 - and a wise man translates that phrase: 'The voice of a gentle whisper'.

What I'm talking about primarily tonight when I speak of hearing the voice of God is this 'still, small, gentle whisper' of God in our spirit. Do you know something? One of the greatest hindrances to the supernatural is the desire for the spectacular. Let me repeat that: one of the greatest obstacles to the supernatural is the desire for the spectacular. The spectacular can stand in the way of recognising God's voice, because you're waiting for a great booming intonation, like Charlton Heston from the movie - and you have not discerned that that is not normally the way God speaks, and because of that we miss Him when He speaks. Do you know something? I want to tell you something, Christian: you have more than likely been hearing the voice of God regularly, but not recognising it. Perhaps you have been looking for the spectacular, but the still small voice has been there all along.

From the new birth, we talked about it on Sunday night, John 3, the Holy Spirit comes to live within us - and I believe that He comes to live in the human spirit, like the Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle and Temple, and from that spirit He wants to move into the soul and right through the body and have complete control over us. We read in Proverbs 20:27, 'The spirit of a man is the lamp of the LORD, Searching all the inner depths of his heart'. You see, it's the lamp of the Lord, it's where the Lord sees, and it's from that place that the Lord speaks. Turn with me to Romans chapter 8 till we get some more light on this, Romans chapter 8 please verse 16, Paul says: 'The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God', that's really what we're getting at. That doesn't just happen at the moment of conversion, but it's something that continues right throughout the Christian life: the witness of the Spirit to our human spirit - and that witness is often a positive 'Yes'. What I mean by that is, a sort of coming alive within our spirits when we know God is leading us. When you know something is right, or God is speaking, there is something inside you that seems to jump. Now I'll be grasping for words here tonight, because I don't know, I'm sure you have the saying down here: 'It's better felt than telt', do you? Well, that's where this is concerned: it's better felt than telt. If you have experienced this, you'll know what I'm talking about - it's hard to put into words.

When we talk about this witness of the Holy Spirit with our spirit, it's a kind of intuition, a kind of impulse and knowing, an impression that comes upon us that God is wanting us to do something, and positively saying 'Yes' to us in a certain regard. I'm reminded of whenever I was having romantic feelings as a young fellow, and you want to know: 'Is this lassie, is she the one?' - do you remember that? Maybe you've tried to erase it from your memory, or circumstances from then has erased it from your memory! But how many people do you ask: 'Well, how do you know?', and the answer, what's the answer? You know the answer down here, what do they say? 'You'll just know', isn't that what they say? 'You'll just know'. Well, it's a bit like that with this voice, you have a sense: 'God is speaking to me here'.

Now, what He can do in the positive - the Holy Spirit witnessing with your spirit - He can also do in the negative, when He says 'No'. He can bring cautions, by the Holy Spirit to our spirit, and sometimes you've had this, where you sense God saying: 'Be careful!'. Have you ever had that? 'Beware, slow down!' - a sudden deadness. If the

positive is a sudden life, and a sudden jump, there can be this sudden deadness that comes over our spirit, and a lack of life. God is warning us: 'Hold back! Put on the brakes! You're going to make a mistake here!'. Now this can come through various ways. God can speak through a word, He can speak through a thought, He can speak through a feeling, or, as I've said, this intuition, this knowing, this impulse - but that is often how God supplements the word of God, the principles and precepts of the word of God, with this inner witness of the Spirit.

There's a wonderful illustration of it in the Old Testament, I'm not going to get you to turn to it but I'm going to relate it to you. On one occasion in the Old Testament God spoke through the High Priest using two instruments, the Urim and the Thummim - have you ever heard of them? The Urim and the Thummim really, I believe, correspond to the New Testament witness of the Spirit, what we're talking about here. The Urim and the Thummim were contained in a pouch behind the breastplate of the High Priest, which meant it was close to his heart. When there was a need for divine guidance, the High Priest would peek behind the breastplate into the pouch to see if the Urim glowed, and if the Urim glowed that was a signal that He knew the Lord was speaking, and the Lord was saying 'Yes, go ahead and do that, it's My will'. So, if you like, there was this inner burning in the heart of the High Priest that was saying: 'Yes, that is My will'. Now, of course, if there was no glow from the Urim, then he knew that God was speaking not to take action, not to do anything.

Now in the New Testament we read in 1 John 5:6: 'It is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is truth'. Now, the Urim and the Thummim was not an automatic mechanism that you could switch on and switch off like a GPS. Saul found this to his detriment. You might remember the story in 1 Samuel 28. Saul enquired of the Lord if he should go to battle with the Philistines, and what he should do as they were coming upon the Israelites, and it says: 'The Lord did not answer him, either by dreams or by Urim or by the prophets'. Then what Saul did was, he said to his servants: 'Find me a woman who is a medium'. There's something just coming onto my heart just now: there's a lot of the Lord's people, and they're running hither and thither everywhere to find guidance, but going to God. Some of them are running to mediums - now you wouldn't believe that, but that's the truth. You see, what we're talking about here has to be in conjunction with scriptural truth, scriptural principles, precepts, and most of all obedience to those - not just to be hearers and knowers of the word, but doers of the same. It's when that is all bound together that God's voice will be heard clearly.

Now it takes time to discern the voice of God in our spirits, and to recognise this subjective leading of God, and sometimes the signals can be peculiar to you personally. I heard someone say: 'It's not always about learning God's language, but He learns ours, as it were'. What that simply means is: He knows the way as we can understand what He's saying to us, how He's speaking to us. It's all about relationship, it's just like a husband and a wife learning to communicate with one another, and they learn after years together to read one another - so we learn how to know God, how to read what He is saying to us personally. You know couples, the wee things they laugh over that nobody else would laugh over, a certain look that they have toward one another, a raised eyebrow maybe, and he knows he's in trouble! It's communicated, and it can be read and understood - and what do they develop out of? Those signals develop out of relationship, getting to know one another. Now listen: when you develop a relationship with God, you begin to read Him, you begin to read His promptings and His nudges and His checks.

There's a lot of people, and they really get uptight about the issue of guidance, don't they? 'What does God want me to do here? Who does God want me to marry? What does God want me to do as a career? Where does God want me to live? What church does God want me to go to?' - and the danger is, guidance is first and foremost a relationship with the Guide. Never turn from the Giver to the gift. You see, the reason why God wants us to hear His instruction is not because He wants us to be in the right place, He wants us to get close enough to Him that we hear Him! Are you understanding what I'm saying tonight? God is more concerned about who you are in relationship to Him, than what you do for Him. You remember I said last night: Christianity is not about doing, it's about being. In the same regard, God is more concerned about who you are in relation to Him, and you getting a knowledge of that, than what you do for Him or where you do it.

It's wonderful, and I hope it's an encouragement to some of you folk here tonight, to know that you don't have to rely on some super-spiritual Christian for guidance. You don't have to rely on your minister, or your pastor, or an elder. You don't have to rely on an elite Bible teacher, whilst we may have our favourites, you don't need to depend on them for the guidance of God. You know there was a group of false teachers, we heard about the Judaisers that came into Galatia, well there was another crowd and they came into Ephesus and some other churches, and they were called Gnostics. John was getting at them when he wrote his first Epistle of John. They were saying that there's only a certain select few who are in touch with God, and these special prophets, elect prophets of God, they're the only ones who can tell you what the will of God is for your life and the word of God. Do you know what John said to them? 1 John 2:20: 'You, Christians, have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things' - isn't that wonderful? You have everything at your disposal in the Holy Spirit who indwells you, and the voice of God that speaks to you. Built, of course, on the principles and precepts of the word, and on subsequent obedience to that, you have everything you need to know God's will for your life.

Now sometimes confirmation of God's will can come from the voice of another person, but can I tell you to beware of anybody that comes up to you and says: 'God told me to tell you that you need to do this, or be this, or go there, or else God's going to do this to you'. Do you see anybody that says that? You send them on their way, and say: 'Whenever God wants me to do that, He can tell me Himself, and He doesn't need you to tell me'. Now I'm not saying that God can't bring people along who say: 'I think this is what God wants for you', but anybody who says, 'If you don't listen to what I'm telling you, you're going to get cast down or zapped' - don't you listen to that person, because God is well able to instruct you and teach you in the way that you should go, because 24/7 you've got the Holy Spirit with you. That's why you ought to be filled with Him, as we said on Monday night, so that you can be absolutely sure you're right smack, bang, centre in the will of God.

We've got to move on. What does it mean to hear the voice of God? We've seen that, but how can we recognise His voice? Now I'm going to try not to make this more complicated than it needs to be, we often complicate things. It's actually not that hard to hear the voice of God if you really want to obey Him. If you stay humble, He promises to guide you. Now I have to say that there are times, and I have experienced times of silence in my life when I haven't sensed God speaking - but I have to also reiterate that that, as far as I'm aware, is the exception rather than the rule. Those are

times of testing that are rather unusual, and God has a purpose for them, and He always comes back and speaks again. But normally, and generally speaking, God has a lot to say to us, our problem is - well, it can be many things, our ears can be plugged through unbelief, or through pride, or through sin, or maybe we don't expect to hear Him. I think that's probably the case for a lot of Christians: they're not expecting to hear from God, so they're not listening for Him. Or maybe they don't know what to listen to or for? They can't recognise His voice. You know there are waves going through the air constantly, radio waves, aren't there? You need a tuner, and you need an aerial, and a receiver to tune into them - but maybe you don't know what to look for, what to listen for, to hear the voice of God? Another common difficulty that people have is: 'Well, it's alright talking about this voice of God in my spirit, but how do I know it's not the devil?'. Have you ever thought like that? How do you know it's not the devil telling you to do that? Or how do you know it's not just yourself? Some fleshly desire, 'Lord, You want me to marry this beautiful big six-foot blonde, Lord, is that what You want?' - it could be the flesh. How do you know?

Well, let me share with you six things that you need, and they're very simple things. It's not a formula, but it's just coming honestly to the Scripture, six things that you really need to get in place if you want to be sure of hearing the voice of God. Here's the first thing: you need faith. This life is a life of faith, didn't I say it last night? The word of God makes clear: it's from faith to faith, the just shall live by faith. It follows, therefore, that you must believe that God is a God who speaks if you're going to hear His voice. Hebrews 11 and verse 6: 'Without faith it is impossible to please God', listen, 'He that comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is the rewarder of those that diligently seek Him'. The word 'is' there, I believe, has the sense of 'He is active'. Those who come to God must believe that God is active and moving, and a God who answers prayer, if they're going to be rewarded. If you're going to hear the voice of God, you have to be a person who believes He speaks. So you need faith, and of course that will breed expectancy, and expectancy to hear God is what draws God's voice out - so you need faith.

Here's a second thing: you need humility. You see, it presupposes that if you are seeking to hear from God, you have a sense of your need to hear from Him. I have to say to you here tonight: there's a lot of people, and they know a lot of this book, and praise God for any knowledge that we have, but they are satisfied with an intellectual cerebral knowledge of doctrine, just like the Pharisees. They know their Bible, but they don't know their God, and when their God showed up in the flesh - Jesus Christ - they didn't recognise Him. Pride was the sin of the Pharisees, and pride can often be the sin of the evangelical, the Christian. They have the Laodicean complex, where they have need of nothing. You might say: 'What do I need to hear from God? I've got the Bible here, and that's all I need to know'. The requirement for everything in the Christian life is humility. Proverbs 3:5-6: 'Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths'. Isaiah 57 and verse 15, what a wonderful verse: 'For thus says the High and Lofty One Who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: 'I dwell in the high and holy place'', this is a contradiction, apparently, 'With him who has a contrite and humble spirit''. God dwells in the high and holy place with the lowly one, the one who is down on the ground on his face. That's God's economy, that God's logistics, that God meets humble people. As James and Peter said: 'God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble', or as someone else put it, 'God resists the proud, but He can't resist the humble'.

If you want to hear the voice of God you need to feel your need to hear from Him. If you've got it all made, and all sewed up, and settled, and you know everything - you'll not hearing from God, because you're not listening for God. You know it all. You need faith, you need humility, here's a third thing: you need purity. You can hear the Lord much more clearly with a pure, clean heart. Now it's a verse in Psalm 66, verse 18, that says: 'If you regard iniquity in your heart, the Lord will not hear you'. The word for 'regard' there is 'cherish', if you prize iniquity, a particular sin in your heart that you love, the Lord will not hear you. But you can turn that on its head: if you cherish iniquity in your heart, you'll not hear the Lord either. It's communion we're looking for, isn't it? It's two-way, you speaking to God, and God communicating to you. One of the greatest barriers is a sin in your life, or sins, that you need to repent of. Is there something tonight, and you need to confess it, renounce it, forsake it and be done with it, because it's blocking your ears from hearing the voice of God?

Maybe you're unsure why the voice of God is blocked? Well, there's nothing better than having a day or two of cleansing, fasting, and prayer, and seeking God for release to get that cleansing, and that purity, and that transparency, and that honesty in your relationship with Him. You need faith, you need humility, you ought to seek purity, but fourthly: perhaps what is needed - this may not be needed for everyone - but perhaps what is needed is healing. There could be issues in your life where you need deliverance, and you need inner healing for hurts of the past, or things that have got hold on you, bitterness, or all sorts of inner problems, spiritual issues, emotional, mental.

Duncan Campbell used to preach on Elisha and the school of prophets, and you remember the young prophets, the students, were out and they had borrowed an axe, and the head came off the borrowed axe. Elisha gave them this advice, remember? 'Go back to where you last had it, and there you will find it'. Duncan Campbell used to say: 'Sometimes we momentarily lose our axe heads, our best cutting-edge tool for ministry: the clear voice of God. It helps to go back to the place where we last knew we had heard the sharp edge of God's voice'. Is there someone here tonight, and you once heard the voice of the Master? He once communicated to you, and you heard Him as clear as a bell, but tonight you don't, and you haven't for many a year. Well, trace the steps back, where did you lose the axe head? Where did it stop? Did it stop when you swallowed some dead orthodox doctrine with no life? Did it stop when you made a fleshly decision, you were walking in the Spirit and you made a fleshly decision that took you the wrong way? I don't know what it might be, it might be a sin that you started dabbling in. Or it might not be a sin, it might be a bitterness, a hurt that was done on you, an unforgiveness - we're going to talk about this tomorrow night - unforgiveness has caused a root of bitterness in your heart, and it has become a cloud between you and God. You might need healing for that.

A fifth thing you need, after faith, humility, purity, healing, is obedience. Now this statement that I'm going to give you now is one of the greatest revelations I've ever had in my Christian experience, listen: obedience is the instrument of revelation. Obedience is the instrument of revelation. What that simply means is: you must obey what God is telling you now if you want continued guidance from God. If God has shown you something that you must do, or must cease from doing, and you have disobeyed, God is not obliged to show you anything more until you do the thing He has already told you. There is a New Testament pattern, of course, that hearing the voice

of God isn't so that we can strut around like peacocks and say: 'God spoke to me today, you know! And this is what He said...'. The voice of God is in order that we might be obedient in serving God. Ecclesiastes 5 and verse 7 in a paraphrase says this: 'Dreaming instead of doing is foolishness'. There's a lot of folk talk about the voice of God, and talk about all sorts of supernatural communications, but that's the end in itself: God communicates to us in order that we move and do. God said to Isaiah: 'Your ears shall hear a word behind you saying, 'This is the way, walk in it''. Whenever you turn to the right hand, or whenever you turn to the left hand, God is wanting to speak so that we may know what to do. In Amos chapter 3 and verse 3 we get the same thing. Amos was the prophet who had a burden from the Lord, and he had heard the voice of God, and it says in Amos 3:3: 'Can two walk together except they be agreed?'. I believe he was alluding to himself: he heard the voice of God roaring like a lion, the book says, because he was walking with God - and walking with God was simply being in agreement with God. You see, we must walk with God if we want to converse with God. Do you know something? To walk with God in obedience, you must walk at God's pace.

There is a Japanese missiologist - if you don't know what that is, it's simply someone who studies world missions across the globe. I'll not even attempt his name, but he talks about the 'three mile an hour God'. He says: 'This is the God of the Bible who led the Israelites out into the desert for a 40 year walk at 3 miles per hour, so they could learn that man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God' - a 3 mile an hour walk, that's the pace all of us walk by the way, generally, on average. It took them 40 years to learn a twenty word truth, that 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God' - and they had to walk at God's pace to learn it. Listen to Psalm 32:8-9: 'I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will guide you with My eye. Do not be like the horse', what does the horse do? It runs on ahead. 'Or like the mule', what does the mule do? He digs his heels in and won't go. 'Don't be like the horse that runs ahead, don't be like the mule that's stubborn, which have no understanding, which must be harnessed with bit and bridle, else they will not come near you'. God does not want us not coming near Him because we're running ahead of Him, or we're holding back after Him - He wants us to walk beside Him, so that we might understand what the will of the Lord is. That will only happen when you learn to walk with God and walk at His pace, be in agreement with Him.

There needs to be obedience. Listen, you can't run around with one foot in the world, and one foot in the kingdom of Christ, and expect to hear from the voice of God in clarity. You need to obey. The sixth thing that is needed is stillness. You need faith, you need humility, you need purity, you need healing, perhaps, you need obedience, and you need stillness. Life is so busy, isn't it? I mean we have all the mod cons today, and yet life seems to be more busy than ever - because we have all these things we get things done a lot quicker, so we have more time, so we fill up the time with more things to do. Life is so noisy as well, isn't it? There can be, even within our hearts, an internal disquiet through fear and anxiety - and I'll touch on that on Friday night - so that we can't hear the voice of God. Even our external environments can create so much hustle and bustle. I mean the noise pollution through technology alone is incredible. I have an iPod, but some people just can't live without an iPod on their ears, and they have these smartphones that can tell them everything under the sun - and Satan, there is no doubt about it, is clamouring for our attention, just like advertisers clamour for us to buy their product. Satan wants to block out the rivals for

our attention, and his greatest rival, of course, is the voice of God. There is even a communication explosion - you know, you don't go anywhere without your mobile phone today. Twenty years ago we didn't know what a mobile phone was, it was about the size of a horse! We've got all these wee mobile phones everywhere, and anybody, just like that, can get in touch with us right away. We can talk to people across the globe, we can see them, and so we've got this pressure that we are constantly in contact with human beings - it's hard to get alone at times.

Now, don't misunderstand me, you don't have to be alone to be still before God. John Wesley's mother, Susanna Wesley, with all those teams of children running around her, was able to throw her apron over her head, and in all the racket just have time with God and stillness. It's something to do with the heart. But often what we do need to do is get more quietness, and get stillness, and be done with the distractions. Any of you who have children and a piano know what it is to be on the phone with the child battering the piano in the background - it's hard to speak to anyone with such a distraction, isn't it? We need to eliminate all the distractions we can to communing with God.

Now, let me finish on this note, one of the greatest distractions is this one: how do you know whether or not it's yourself you're hearing, or the voice of the devil? Now, let me deal with this - give me five minutes, will you, to deal with it? How do you know whether it's yourself or the devil? Well, here's a first way of knowing: the tone of the voice. There is a certain intonation to the voice of God that is different than the voice of the accuser, and different from the voice of the flesh. You know the voice of the accuser, the devil, it's condemning. You know something, there could be someone here tonight and you committed some particular sin, and you've already renounced it, and confessed it, and forsook it, and asked forgiveness for it - but you're continually dogged with condemnation. God never does that, that's the accuser, because the voice of the Spirit that convicts us, it disappears whenever we repent and confess. He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. So if there is a voice of accusation, nagging and condemning you, that's not the voice of God for confessed sin.

Let me show you this from Scripture, how to know the tone of Heavenly Father's voice. Turn with me to James chapter 3. If you are hungry to hear the voice of God, I want to exhort you to take these verses here in James 3 and study them in detail, because you will find great instruction here on how to discern the witness of the Spirit with your spirit. Look at verse 15, verse 14 says: 'If you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above', so James is now talking about wisdom that is not from God, look at it, 'but is earthly, sensual', that means fleshly, it's of the flesh, of you, or it can be 'demonic'. So he's going to explain to us now how we recognise wisdom, instruction, that is either from ourselves, the bad part, our flesh, or the devil. Here it is: 'Where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there'. So if there is a spirit of envy in you about doing a thing, going down a path, exercising a particular gift; if you're self-seeking; if you're confused, every evil thing is there. Verse 17: 'But the wisdom that is from above', look, 'is first pure'. So God's voice is pure, that means anything that is impure and motivated by impurity is not from God. It is also 'then peaceable' - oh, boys-a-dear, there wouldn't be half the splits in churches in Ulster if men were listening to God's voice, because they wouldn't be doing things that were unpeaceable. It is an abomination in God's sight for brother to fall out with brother, those who sow

discord among brethren. The wisdom of God is peaceable, here's something else: it's gentle. If there's anything that comes to you as an impulse, and it's harsh, and it's coarse, and it's rough, it's not from God. 'Willing to yield', and this is a touchy one here in our province - but you see when you get on your high horse about your rights, that's not the wisdom of God. If the Lord Jesus Christ got obsessed with His rights, you wouldn't be here tonight. Do you see it? 'Willing to yield', willing to yield even when you're being robbed of your rights. 'Full of mercy', that's forgiveness - that's a whole other subject we will look at tomorrow night. 'Good fruits', by their fruits you shall know them, it's the same with wisdom. 'Without partiality and without hypocrisy', not putting on a show, not being motivated by a mask before who you really are.

'Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace' - what a test! Now we don't have time to go into all that, but that is a wonderful list of ingredients of how to know the tone of God's voice over and above the devil's and the flesh. But if you're still not sure, here's three tests - listen: first of all, submit to the Lordship of Jesus. Submit to the Lordship of Jesus, ask Him to help you silence your thoughts and desires and opinions that are from the flesh, even other people's. The Bible says in 2 Corinthians 10 and verse 5 that we have authority to cast down arguments, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. So you submit yourself to the Lordship of Jesus, and say: 'Lord, I don't want to do what I want to do, without Your will and Your direction'.

Secondly, resist the enemy in case he's trying to deceive you. Use the authority of Jesus to silence the enemy, listen to James chapter 4 and verse 7: 'Submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you' - so do that! If you're worried about it being the flesh, submit yourself to the Lordship of Christ. If you're worried about it being the devil, submit yourself to God and resist the devil, and he must flee from you - and then wait and expect an answer from God, and allow Him to guide you as He sees fit, when He sees fit.

Life as God intended for His people is a life of hearing God's voice. Can I tell you something? Spiritual growth, I believe, does not develop until the Christian begins to hear from God through the word and through the Spirit.

Oh Father, we thank You for even hearing Your voice tonight. Lord, we know that You want to take us into that sweet garden of fellowship, to walk with us and talk with us, to share the secrets of Your heart. Oh Lord, we are so busy, and occupied, and disturbed, and distracted. Oh Lord, teach us to come apart, and to rest and wait upon You, and learn what it is. In this Laodicean age, Lord, You are knocking, Lord Jesus, at the door, and You're saying: 'If any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in and sup with him and he with Me'. Oh Lord Jesus, may some tonight hear Your voice and enter such wonderful dining communion and fellowship with You forevermore. Amen.

Transcribed by Andrew Watkins, Preach The Word - November 2011
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Life As God Intends For His People - Chapter 5
**"Life Free From The Enemy - Part 1:
Oppression And Unforgiveness"**

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Well, good evening to you all. Thank you to Hazel for that ministry, that beautiful piece in song. Thank you to all of you for coming again - as has already been said, some of you have been out previous nights, and you're with us again. Some of you have been out every night. I have to be here every night, but you don't! And I can appreciate that, so thank you for coming - and the Lord, I trust, has been speaking to us and moving in our lives. Sunday night I spoke on 'Life Eternal', 'Life As God Intends For His People' is 'Life Eternal'. Monday night, 'Life As God Intends For His People' is 'Life Empowered By The Spirit', the Holy Spirit of God. On Tuesday night we look at a 'Life Of Grace Not Law', and last night we looked at a 'Life of Hearing God', how God speaks to us. Tonight and tomorrow night we're taking the one subject, and that is 'Life Free From The Enemy', and the life that God intends for His people is free from the enemy, the devil - and specifically tonight we're going to look at two areas: the area of demonic oppression and unforgiveness. Tomorrow evening we're going to look at two areas as well, but they're very closely connected: the areas of fear and anxiety, why the believer should be free from the enemy in these regards. Then on Sunday night we're going to look at how the life of God intends for His people is a 'Life Of Love' - and that's a good one to finish on on Sunday night.

So I want you to turn with me in your Bibles to a very familiar portion of Scripture, Matthew's gospel chapter 6. I have been exhorting you these evenings to take notes, I would encourage you to do that. Of course, if you forgot your pen and paper, there are recordings available of the series, all the meetings. There are little sheets on the table on the way out there at the back, that you can take and order the CDs of the meetings and go over them again - and also there will be available transcripts of the meetings, word-for-word transcript of the messages that you can have in hardcopy if you prefer those rather than the CDs. Those are made available through 'Preach The Word', which is the website with all my ministry on it - people didn't realise that, I should have said, and you can find out a little bit about that on the prayer letters at the back. All my ministry is on the Internet in audio form and in transcript word-for-word form, and Andrew Watkins is the brains behind that - I just do the preaching, and he puts it all on there free-of-charge for the benefit of God's people. You can order any of the CDs of all the series for free, and they can even be posted to you. Somebody from Stranocum has been getting some already, I don't know whether they're here or not tonight! But there you are, isn't that amazing?

So let's turn to Matthew chapter 6 verses 12 and 13, and you know it of course off by heart, this is the Lord's prayer. Probably better called 'the disciple's prayer', because He never had the pray this part of it, because He did no sin, knew no sin, and in Him was no sin - but in verse 12 He instructs the disciples to pray. *"Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one"*.

Let us pray, and as we come before the Lord - as I have invited you each night - I want you to come to the Lord yourself now, and ask Him that if there is anything that He should reveal to you, that you might say with the Psalmist: 'Search me, O God, and try me, try my heart, and see if there be any wicked way in me, any anxious way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting'. We're looking at demonic oppression, why not come to the Lord and say: 'Lord, if there's anything in my life that is coming from the devil, I pray that You will show me'. Also the area of unforgiveness, 'If there's bitterness in my heart, Lord, if there is someone who I need to forgive, Lord, will You reveal that to me?'. Now, are you man enough and woman enough to ask the Lord something like that? Now let me just warn you before you ask Him: if He shows you, you are responsible to do something about it. So you're better not asking if you're not prepared to do anything - but I believe tonight God is going to reveal things, and He's going to really challenge you, and He could change lives here tonight, I believe that. I believe He could deliver and liberate people from bondage that they are in to the devil because of these two areas. It's exciting, isn't it? So let's pray.

Father, we thank You that the Lord Jesus is stronger than Satan, and Satan to Jesus must bow. We thank You, Lord, that You have put Him above all, far above all. Through the cross and through the blood of the Lamb, we can overcome the accuser, that old dragon can be cast down through the blood of the Lamb, and our testimony concerning that blood and what it has done. Lord, we invoke the precious blood tonight, and the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Oh, thank You that we can say: 'In the name of Jesus, in the name of Jesus, we have the victory'. Lord, we thank You that You've put all things beneath His feet, all kings and potentates, presidents, prime ministers, all rulers - but all heavenly beings, O God, principalities and powers. We thank You that even the cherubim and the seraphim, and all the angelic hosts are beneath His feet - He's far above them all, He's King of Kings, and Lord of Lords. We ask tonight that, by the Holy Spirit, that His Lordship would reign and rule in this gathering. He said that 'The Spirit of the Lord has anointed Me to heal the brokenhearted, and to set at liberty the captives'. Lord, I pray, that by the Holy Spirit, the risen Lord Jesus will do that tonight. In His glorious name we pray, give the power of the Holy Spirit that I need, Lord, that all of us need to engage with You tonight. Give grace for difficult decisions, for painful, Lord, convictions that may, upon people - give the grace for them to go through with God. For Christ's sake we ask it, Amen.

I want you to turn with me a few chapters to Matthew chapter 12. We're looking at 'Life As God Intends For His People', 'Life Free From The Enemy' - and tonight we're looking at freedom from oppression and unforgiveness. In verse 28 of Matthew 12, you remember that the Lord Jesus was being accused by the Jews - it's a real turning point in Jewish history, where they are accusing the Lord of doing His miracles and His various mighty signs through the power of the devil. In verse 28 the Lord Jesus says: 'And if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God', He's asserting that it's not by Beelzebub, but by the Spirit of God - if this is what I do, 'surely the kingdom of God has come upon you. Or how can one enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house'. Down to verse 43: 'When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest, and finds none. Then he says, 'I will return to my house from which I came'. And when he comes, he finds it empty, swept, and put in order. Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first. So shall it also be

with this wicked generation'.

In verse 28, look at it again, Jesus said: 'If I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you'. When the Lord Jesus cast out demons, He went beyond the precedent of the Old Testament. As far as I'm aware, there are several examples in the Old Testament of miracles, but there is no record of any prophet or any patriarch who ever cast out a demon. It appears that this great act was reserved for the Lord Jesus, in order that it should be a unique demonstration that the kingdom of God had come upon the people of His day. In verse 29, the Lord Jesus says: 'How can one enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house'. Jesus is the stronger Man, who has invaded the strong man, Satan's, house. He has bound him, He has overcome him, and He has taken his weapons and is now claiming his spoils. Hallelujah!

We often understand the cross and the Saviour's work in terms of the past: that He has shed His blood, and we are justified, and our sins are forgiven and washed away - but we fail to appropriate the victory of Calvary now, to have victory over sin, the flesh, and the devil in this present moment of our lives. Particularly tonight we're looking at victory over Satan. Do you know, whether you're a believer or not, do you know that the blood of Jesus Christ and the sacrifice of the cross of Calvary gives us victory over the devil? Paul says in Colossians chapter 2:15 that the Lord Jesus, at the cross, spoiled principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly, triumphing over them through the cross. We read in 1 John 3 and verse 8: 'For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the wicked one'. Hebrews chapter 2 verse 14 says that the Lord Jesus took upon Himself flesh and blood in order that He might die, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is: the devil.

Now in the last two verses I quoted from 1 John and Hebrews, the word 'destroy' is used. The Son of God is manifest to destroy the work of the devil. The word in the original Greek literally means 'loose'. Jesus came to loose us from the bondage that the devil has us in. It can also mean 'to dissolve', He wants to dissolve the hold that Satan has on us. It can also mean 'to sever', He wants to sever the ties that the devil might have on our lives. It can also mean 'demolish', He wants to demolish the devil's kingdom. The word is 'luo', it has the root meaning 'to come unstuck', or 'unplugged'. So, literally, what the Lord Jesus Christ did when He came in the flesh and walked among men, casting out demons, healing various diseases, preaching the Gospel of the kingdom, was: He was plucking apart the devil's kingdom at the seams. He was dismantling the kingdom of this world, whose god is the devil himself. He was coming in to release mankind from under the sway, and the rule and reign of Satan. Christ came to free us from evil and demonic influences. He came to unglue the devil's hold that he has upon us.

I want to ask you tonight - maybe you're not even a Christian here, or maybe you're a backslider, or maybe you're a struggling child of God - I want to ask you: are you sharing in the victory of the cross over the devil and over darkness? Because it is your right, through the blood of the Lord Jesus. Turn with me to Ephesians chapter 6, Paul - having expounded the real blessings that we have in heavenly places in Christ - he gets very practical into chapters 4, 5 and 6. At the end he starts to address these powers of darkness that believers have to struggle with. In verse 10 of Ephesians 6, he says: 'Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on

the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles', or the schemes, 'of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand'. Then he begins to describe the armour that God has given us, from the tip of the head to the toes of the feet, how He can cover us and protect us from the enemy - but here's the question that I want you to answer tonight as a Christian: why would Paul exhort this? Why would he tell these believers that they're not wrestling with flesh and blood, but they have an enemy, and they are under attack, and they need an armour, if there's no danger of Christians coming under the influence of the devil? Why would he do this? Well, of course, he wouldn't - it's obvious that there is some grave threat upon the Christian from the powers of darkness, and the devil and demons themselves. Yet we go along our merry evangelical way, and you'd think the devil couldn't touch us because we're saved.

Let me show you this again from another portion of Scripture, 2 Corinthians chapter 11 verse 1, Paul says: 'Oh, that you would bear with me in a little folly; and indeed you do bear with me. For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ'. Now look at verse 3: 'But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ'. Just like Eve in the Garden was deceived by the subtle serpent, who was the devil, he was afraid - Paul - that these Corinthian Christians would be deceived by the devil. So if it's not possible for believers to be deceived by the devil, why is Paul wasting his breath? Oh, it's very possible.

Let me show you again, lest you think that I'm making all this up. First Peter chapter 5 - I'm just establishing here this undergirding principle for tonight, that there is a threat to believers from the enemy - 1 Peter 5 verses 8 and 9: 'Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world'. You've got to resist the devil, because he's after you. He's a roaring lion - and I have to say this: to a large extent, he knows that he has people who are unconverted, he's already got them; so public enemy number one for Satan and demons is the child of God, the believer. So I think it is obvious that believers can come under the influence of demons.

Now, is that something that you concur with tonight? Maybe you're being cautious just now, and you're thinking: 'Well, where are you going with this? I hope you're not going to suggest that Christians can be demon-possessed?'. Well, let me say something to you: the term 'demon-possessed' is an unfortunate term in the English language that has come to translate a Greek term which doesn't carry the sense of possession. You see, when we talk about 'possession' in our English tongue, we think of ownership - and right away we know that a child of God is not owned by the devil, he is owned by God, and he's possessed. We saw on Sunday night, he's possessed by a new Spirit, and that is the Holy Spirit, the very life of God that comes into him when he is born-again. So we think, therefore, that 'Well, demons could never possess a Christian, because he is owned, or she is owned, by the Lord'. But often what that can bring is a false sense of security. Whilst we concur that a Christian cannot be owned by the devil or demons, what the word in the Greek language actually means - it's often, badly I

would have to say, translated 'demon possession' - is 'demonisation', and that's a whole different thing. That simply means 'coming under the influence of a demonic spirit', coming under the sway, or sometimes under the control. Now that can happen to lesser or to greater extents. It can happen simply by a thought that a demon places into your head that you know didn't come from you, or it can go to the further extreme of actually pulling the strings of your behaviour and dictating your actions.

Can a Christian be demon-possessed? Not in the sense of ownership, of course not. But can they come under the influence of demonic spirits and demonic oppressions? I believe the Scripture teaches yes. Second Corinthians chapter 2 has a very interesting verse, verse 11 - verse 10 reads: 'Now whom you forgive anything, I also forgive. For if indeed I have forgiven anything, I have forgiven that one for your sakes in the presence of Christ', here's why Paul said he forgave this man, 'lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices'. Now that has been translated in Young's Literal Translation like this: 'that we may not be overreached by the adversary' - that's what the devil wants to do! He wants to overreach you and trip you up! Another verse is in Ephesians 4, you don't need to turn to it, I'll read it to you: 'Do not give occasion to the devil', or as Weymouth translates it, 'Do not leave room for the devil'. The NIV translates it: 'Do not give the devil a foothold' - that's a good translation. It is possible for a believer to give the devil - probably not the devil himself, because he's not omnipresent, he can only be in one place at the one time - but certainly demonic spirits, it's possible for the believer to give demonic spirits a foothold in their life.

Are these Scriptures not teaching this? The problem is this: when you give the devil a foothold, it very quickly becomes a stronghold, and there is an area of your life that is no longer controlled by you. It's not very long until that foothold, that has become a stronghold, becomes a stranglehold - and it squeezes the life and the vitality of your spiritual experience, every drop of it, out of you. In 2 Corinthians chapter 10, if you look at this, it speaks of strongholds, verse 3, Paul reiterates again: 'For though', these are Christians he's speaking to, 'though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal', not fleshly, 'but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ'. So we have been given weapons, as Christians, to pull down strongholds. Now listen carefully to what I'm saying, and let me be as practical as possible - and I believe I'm speaking to someone tonight, more than one perhaps: if you give Satan ground in your life, even as a Christian, especially as a Christian, if you give Satan ground he will claim that area of your life - and he, effectively, will camp upon that ground, and he will take up residence upon it in your life if you surrender it to him.

It could be that there is someone here tonight, and you're dabbling in darkness. There could be all sorts of causes of this, but you know exactly what I'm talking about. It could be some form of immorality, some form of secret sin. It could be some habit, some addiction. It could be some occultic practice of darkness - and I alluded to this last night. I'm not sure you believed me or not, I hope you did, but I alluded to you that Christians are actually going to mediums to get inside knowledge of the future, rather than going to God. I'll back that up: there is a medium goes round the country, they're probably in Ballymoney, maybe Ballymena more, into hotels. They're in Portadown I know once a year now, maybe even twice. They travel all around, and

there are posters everywhere about this clairvoyant. I know of a gentleman who was giving out tracts outside Portadown Town Hall, and he saw Sunday School teachers from churches in the town going in for this session with the clairvoyant. There are Christians reading horoscopes, getting their palms read, going to people for hypnotism to overcome certain habits, delving into alternative therapies of medicine - all sorts of weird and wonderful things that have their sources in paganism, Chinese paganistic Daoism, and all sorts of New Age religion. You know there are Christians - and this is very much upon my heart, I didn't plan to say this - but they will go to the devil quicker to get healed than go to God! They say God can't heal, but they run to the devil.

Now I want you to understand, believer: you're not immune. Ananias and Sapphira, in Acts chapter 5, sold a portion of their land and gave the proceeds to the new church in Jerusalem. Of course, you know what the big lie of that was - they made out that they gave all the proceeds to the church, but they actually held back some for themselves. Now there wasn't anything wrong with making a bit of money out of that deal, but they made out that they gave everything when they kept some back. In Acts chapter 5, this is what Peter said to them: 'Ananias', listen now, 'Why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself?'. 'Why has Satan filled your heart?', and he fell down dead, and they carried him out of that church. Now, was the sole lesson in this incident: 'Thou shalt not steal'? I don't think so, surely it was more to do with the battle over the inner territory of Ananias and Sapphira's heart? It was more to do with that than the piece of land. The problem was - and this is the problem, and this could be your problem tonight - Ananias and Sapphira, this couple, married couple, believed that they could be 95% obedient to God, but remain safely disobedient in one small area. This was a patch big enough for Satan to gain a stronghold, and Satan filled their hearts by it - it was greed.

Now I hope you know I'm proving all of this from Scripture. Can you see that? Neutrality in this universe is not an option. You're either for Christ, or you're against Him - there is no in between. In this spiritual war that has been raged through the ages, you're either for the Lord Jesus or you're against Him. Look at Matthew 12 again please, Jesus said this in verse 30, we didn't read it - it's in this context of this spiritual warfare: 'He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad'. Then He goes on, and we read the latter verses, verses 43 to 45, and He tells them: 'Beware of an empty life!'. He talks about a house that had demons in it, and they were cast out, going through dry places seeking rest and finding none, and they returned to the house from which they were cast out and they found it empty, swept, and put in order - and they went and got seven other spirits more wicked than themselves, and took up habitation in that house again. The house was a man, a human being, and Jesus says that the end result of that man was worse than his first state. Now, what is Jesus teaching? You cannot have an empty life. You cannot have an empty life! Young people especially, maybe you don't want to get all tied up, as you think, with religion too early in your life. You think you can live free - well, you're finding out very quickly, if you're honest, that there is no such a thing as complete and absolute freedom. You're either a slave to the devil, or you're a slave to God - which are you? Believer, you're either fully submissive to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, or there is some part of your life that the devil has control of - and through it he is oppressing you. You need to be very careful, because the devil sees emptiness, or neutrality in a particular area, as an open invitation to come and start work - even in the life of a believer. Satan is a legal expert: if you have given him ground, he has a

right to retain it until you deal with it before God.

I want to ask you tonight: what ground have you given over to the devil? Right in the beginning, in the book of Genesis in the Garden of Eden, Adam was given jurisdiction by God in His sovereignty - He actually sort of devolved it to Adam to a certain extent. What Adam did in the Garden when the tempter came along, he relinquished it and give it over to the devil. That's why at the temptation of the Lord Jesus in Matthew chapter 4, Satan could say to the Lord: 'I'll give you all the kingdoms of the world if You do this', because they were his. Now listen, believer: if you relinquish any part of your life, any area, to the devil because of choices that you make against the will of God, you can effectively be giving a right to the devil in that area of your life.

Now I know that this is shocking to some of you, but it ought to be - because you see as believers, we have got this wee evangelical hocus-pocus in our head, that because we have prayed: 'Lord Jesus, come into my heart', or whatever we prayed, that we are walking around immune from the devil. Ah, but here's where it gets tricky: we think we can dabble in all sorts of sins, and we just run and say 'Lord, sorry about that, will You forgive me?', without any consequence - and it's not true. I'm not saying you'll go to hell for it, but what I am saying is: you could experience hell for it, if you have given a right to the devil.

Now let me ask you now: have any of you, as believers, certainly as non-believers this is going to be the case, have any of you given rights to the devil in areas of your life, and he's hammering you with it? Let me be very specific: lust, Internet pornography is at epidemic proportions in the church of Jesus Christ, and nobody wants to talk about it. It's probably the biggest problem that is unseen, invisible, and unspoken, that we are wrestling with in spiritual warfare - but you're not allowed to name it from the pulpit. I have been criticised for talking about things like this in the pulpit - and yet the wee women that criticise me are sitting in seven nights a week watching 'Coronation Street'. If our children don't hear the truth from the pulpit, they're going to hear the lies in the playground. I'm not saying to talk inappropriately from the pulpit, I don't believe in that, I believe we need to reverence the pulpit - but we've got to preach the truth to counteract the lies of the devil. Man, and sadly woman, if you have given a right over to the devil by delving in pornography - do you know: pornography is wildly tempting, but it's extremely demonic. There are demons involved with pornography, and if you dabble in it, you're dabbling with demons that can get a hold of you.

Pride can also open the way to the devil. Do you remember a couple of nights ago I talked from Galatians 3 verse 1 about Paul saying, 'Who has bewitched you?' - and it was as if a spell had been cast on the Galatians, this legalism that had come in. I believe legalism comes from the devil, I do. Some Christians think they're really holy because they know all the dos and don'ts, and they have their own specific list of dos and don'ts - wait till I tell you: that not only robs your joy from you, but that can open you up to the devil and oppression. Sectarianism is a big one - boy, we could take a whole series on that one - sectarianism, I believe the devil has capitalised on it down through the years in our land, and I believe it's demonic. Bitterness, a root of bitterness can be capitalised on by the devil. Jealousy, envy, of course all the obvious ones like the occult itself, dabbling in dark arts, or idolatry. Idolatry is always connected in the Bible with demonism, behind every idol there is a demon, the word of God says. But wait till I tell you: your idol could be your Mercedes-Benz, or your three-storey. I'm not against people having three stories or Mercedes-Benz, as long as they

don't become an idol.

How do you deal with oppression that comes from the devil? Would you claim deliverance through Jesus Christ? In John 14 verse 30, Jesus said: 'I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming, and he has nothing in Me'. Now if he had nothing in our Lord, and we are in Christ, he ought to have nothing in us! If he has anything in us, it's because we have given it to him. In Romans 6:16, Paul says: 'Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey'. The only way to deal with this type of oppression is: confess whatever it is that you have been involved in. Confess simply means to agree with God. Repent, that means change your mind and be willing to change your behaviour with the power of God. Renounce the works of the devil, whatever they are; cease doing them, but renounce your involvement in them - even if you've been taking oaths, and some have taken blood oaths, children of God who are meant to be in blood covenant with Jesus have gone into a blood covenant with somebody else - in secret, mind. They have brought a curse on themselves, and sometimes on their family. Renounce it, and then resist the devil. Submit yourself to God, resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

Time is running on, I want to move on to one of the biggest obstacles in the believers life that Satan can capitalise on, one of the biggest footholds that can become a stronghold and then a stranglehold - and that is the issue of unforgiveness. I don't want you to turn to it, but in Matthew 18 the Lord Jesus - well you can turn to it, we'll not read the parable, but we'll look at a couple of verses in Matthew 18. The Lord Jesus tells the parable of the servant who was forgiven a huge debt of, we would say, millions of pounds by the King. Then that servant refused to write off a wee tiny debt of a few pounds from his neighbour. You know the story, I hope: the King threw the servant into prison until he could repay the entire amount. This is what we read in verses 34 and 35: 'His master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him. So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses'.

Now what the Lord is warning there is that if unforgiveness is in your heart as a child of God, you will never know true freedom, you will never know life as God intends for His people. In fact, some believe here that the torturers here refers to being given over, as it were, to oppression and torture - just like Saul the King was, do you remember? He was tortured by a spirit that was allowed to come from God, why? Because of that bitterness that he had towards David, and his disobedience in various other ways. Do you remember what we read in Matthew chapter 6, the Lord's prayer? Keep your finger in 18 there for a moment, but do you remember: 'Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors' - this is a principle. We as believers don't like thinking about this one, this makes us uncomfortable. We like being told that everything is cleansed and forgiven, and we're off scot-free. We believe we're justified by faith, we spent a whole night on that, but we don't like this talk - there it is further down in verse 15, Jesus reiterates it: 'If you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses'.

What that means is: we are justified by faith alone but if we're going to enjoy this life of God flowing to us and through us, life as God intended, if there is unforgiveness or any sin between us and God the fellowship will not be there. We will not enjoy it. You see, our reaction to our offenders can do as much harm, if not more, than the original

offence. Jesus says in Matthew 18 it can imprison us. Is there anyone here tonight in the prison of unforgiveness? Is there anyone here tonight tortured because of bitterness in their heart, and it's robbing you of the joy of the Lord? It's robbing you of life as God intended for His people! Later on in Matthew 18, if you go back there, in verses 21 and 22 Peter asks the Lord - the penny was dropping for Peter - and he says: 'Lord, how often do I need to forgive someone?'. He thinks he's being real overgenerous when he conjures up the figure seven: 'Lord, that would be something, wouldn't it Lord? Seven times, somebody does the same thing on you over and over again, seven times to forgive'. What does the Lord say? 'Peter, seventy times seven' - 490! But the Lord didn't mean on 491 that you hit them dig in the jaw - what He meant was: 'You just keep forgiving! Stop counting, Peter! Stop counting, and just keep on forgiving!'. Here's a law, here's a spiritual principle: if you want to know continual blessing from God, continual fellowship with the Lord, then you have to be continually forgiving others. That's it! Take it or leave it, but don't try and explain it away.

It's hard, I know. I find it hard - but maybe you're here tonight, and you know something in your mind and in your heart, a root of bitterness, an issue of unforgiveness, some unresolved incident or offence, and you know that that has come between you and God; not only between you and someone else, but between you and God. It's robbing you. But let me say that this is not just a consequence of conscious unforgiveness, something that is at the forefront of your mind at this moment, something you're constantly aware of, something that's a burden on your back and eating you from the inside out. This can be the consequence of subconscious unforgiveness. What I mean is: something that is unconscious to you at this moment, something that has been deeply hidden, something that has been suppressed in your past and buried so that you are maybe even unaware of it. You're oblivious to how it's affecting you!

Let me explain what I mean. Peter Horrobin wrote a marvellous book called, 'Forgiveness, God's Master Key'. In it he describes people, all of us, as being like big houses with many rooms. The rooms of the houses are memories that all of us have gleaned in our lives down here on earth. He says that a lot of the rooms, the memories, are wide open, the doors are wide open for us to come in and out of at our will and to enjoy - because they are pleasant experiences that we can retrace to and are comfortable with. But equally, he says, there are other rooms, and the doors are not wide open: they are shut tight closed - because behind those doors are painful memories, behind those doors are hurts, abuses. Some of those doors have the name 'trauma' written, 'rejection', 'betrayal', 'abuse', 'disloyalty', 'divorce', 'accidents', 'mistakes', 'sins' - and they're too painful to have opened. There are so many people who have so many closed rooms, that there are certain individuals who have very little living space left, and they're being crushed.

Then he goes on to describe that over time it's harder to hold the facade together that everything is all right. Eventually the mess that is behind those closed doors starts to seep from beneath the door, and others start to see it. It's like throwing a bit of cheese into the larder and closing the door, and leaving it there and never dealing with it - in a month's time it will visit you, the smell of it, isn't that right? Eventually the mess seeps from below the door. You go to open the door to deal with it, but you can't because the door is locked, and so often we throw away the key of these painful memories. This is what Peter Horrobin says: 'That is why the Lord Jesus has given us the master key of

forgiveness, to go to those doors with Him; and to open the doors, and to go in and to deal with the mess, and no longer suppress, or hide, or bury those memories - but deal with them through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ'.

Remember I read from 2 Corinthians 2 a moment or two ago, verses 10 and 11, where Paul says: 'I'm going to forgive that man, that you forgive, so that Satan does not get an advantage over us'. Has Satan got an advantage over you because of unforgiveness, because of bitter memories, hurts, things that maybe weren't your fault? You've closed the door of that room, but you know all too well it was never sorted - and there are times in your life, and maybe this is the very moment, where the mess is starting to seep out and people are noticing.

You prayed, I think some of you did, at the beginning to bring to your mind people that you needed to forgive - has He? I think most of us, if we're honest, would have to make a list of people that we need to forgive. I think even if a name comes to your mind that you think, 'That couldn't be right', just write it down anyway, put on the list because God knows better than you, and you need to trust God. You need to go down your list - and I would encourage you, if God is bringing people to your mind now, put them down on a piece of paper. Take the key of forgiveness and release them, and release yourself.

Who's on your list? Most people make lists of family and friends and so on, but can I ask you: are you on the list? What do I mean? Well, a lot of Christians, and some people spoke to me about this last night, a lot of Christians - I'll illustrate it like this: I was with someone recently dealing with these issues one by one, and she was about to go down a list of people that she needed to forgive for various abuses in her life, and she couldn't get off with the first one. She couldn't deal with it, and then she confessed to me, she said: 'David, how can I forgive anyone else when I can't forgive myself?'. You see, there were things she had done in her life, and though she believed she was saved, and she was a Christian - a good evangelical sitting in the pew on a Sunday morning and a Sunday evening, and maybe once or twice during the week - there were things in her heart that she had never truly received the lavish grace of God for. She was still holding those things against herself. God was not holding them against her, she was holding them against herself. Is there someone here tonight, and you need to go on that list? You need to forgive yourself! Now I know it's only God forgives us, but in terminology what I mean is: just accept that He has forgiven you, and release yourself into the wonder of God's forgiveness.

I wonder is God on the list for some of you? God? Forgiving God? Well, we can't forgive God, for we have nothing to forgive Him for - but maybe you've got resentment toward God for something that has happened in your life, something He allowed, something that didn't happen that you felt should have happened. He didn't come through for you when you wanted Him to, your life has not turned out the way you wanted - and in your heart there is, though you wouldn't confess it in the prayer meeting, but there is a bitterness toward God and a resentment that is robbing you of the freedom of the relationship of life in Christ. Does God need to go on the list along with yourself?

What about parents? The reason why I say parents is because all of us are the fruit of our ancestors, aren't we? In the development during our infancy and adolescent years, our parents are the most important people in our lives, the greatest influences upon us - and they, of course, were influenced by their parents, so that affects how we were

influenced by our parents. From the very moment of conception, our parents made choices that affected us. Now thank God, those of us who have good parents, but some of us didn't. Some of us had real bad ones - but can I tell you something? None of us had perfect ones, none of us. None of us are perfect parents, and we have made mistakes. We must thank God for the good that our parents give us, but we also need to forgive our parents, or other members of our family, for anything that was ever said or done that has had a negative impact on our life. It mightn't just be our parents - that would apply to spouses, and children, and close friends. Because, and this is what I want you to see: people will object, and they'll say: 'Hold on a minute! You don't know what my Ma and Da did to me, you don't know how they warped my head, you don't know how they physically, or mentally, or whatever abused me! They don't deserve my forgiveness! Not only that, David, they still persist in that behaviour - they haven't stopped!'

Maybe the person that is on your list, or the people, some of them are dead, and you think it's too late to forgive them. Please listen carefully to what I'm saying, what I'm talking about is forgiveness not primarily for the offender's sake, but for your sake! That's what I want you to understand: unforgiveness will have a hold over you that the devil will capitalise upon, to your spiritual detriment. You need to be free - until you're free, do you know what's really happening: effectively your abuser, whoever they are, is still abusing you. They still have a hold on you. It's as if you're still hooked to that memory behind the closed door. It's as if you're chained to your past, and you need to have those chains broken.

Now there are many misconceptions about forgiveness, and I want to try and clear some of them up quickly in the time that remains. Some of these thoughts I have gleaned from Neil Anderson in his 'Steps to Freedom in Christ'. The first thing I want to say is this: forgiveness doesn't mean forgetting. You know the saying: 'Forgive and forget' - that's a lot of bunkum. You can't forget, and I'll tell you something else - and I say this reverently - not even God can change the past for us. That's a hard statement, but it's maybe a statement that some of you need to face, because you're trying to suppress the past. Your struggle has been burying it and not facing it. Listen: God, when I say He doesn't change the past, He has chosen not, in our lives, to press rewind. He doesn't change the facts of history, what He chooses to do is heal the past and redeem the past - but we've got to face up to it, and we've got to face it with Him. Now I'm not asking you to forget what was done to you. I'm not asking you to forget, you can't forget. What I'm asking you to do is: face it and receive healing for it through the blood of the Lord Jesus.

Forgiveness is not forgetting. Here's a second thing: forgiveness is living with the consequences of another person's sin. Sometimes we want to run away - now I'm not talking about, I don't think anybody should tolerate the sin or abuse of another person, I'm not advocating that. We do not have to condone sin, even upon us - but we do have to live with the consequences of some of the things that have been done to us. As we would say, we have to take some things on the chin. You say, 'Well, that's not fair'. Well, it wasn't fair for the Lord Jesus to be pinned on the cross, was it? The Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God - but, you see, it's not about fair, it's about grace. When the Lord Jesus was hanging on the cross, what did He say? 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do' - they do not know what they are doing. Now there's a myth goes around - and I know it's touching on a political sore point, but I'm beyond caring - that there must be repentance before there can be forgiveness.

I'm not talking politics here, I'm talking theology, get your theology right first. Listen, the Gospel I find in the scriptures tells me this: that God, in Christ, has reconciled the world to Himself. That means the problem that God had with us as sinners has been done away with the cross, so that God - whose back was once toward us - is now facing us. Our problem is: our back is toward Him. He wants to lavish forgiveness on us, but we cannot enjoy that forgiveness until we repent - but He still offers it! He still offers it. Do you understand?

We are to do the same: we are to offer forgiveness toward those who have despitefully used us and abused us, and done all manner of things against us falsely. We are to love them and forgive them. If they don't receive it, they're not going to live in the good of it, but that's their problem. You say, 'Well, where is the justice there?'. Well, let me tell you where it is: it's with God, where it should be. We can't dispense justice - and that's, you see, part of our problem. We all want our pound of flesh, and I'm not minimising what has been done to you, dear person - I haven't a clue - but all I know is this: Jesus knows, and Jesus understands. It's not me who is asking you to do this, it's the Lord Jesus.

Romans chapter 12 says: 'Vengeance is mine', says the Lord, 'I will repay'. One translation put it like this: 'Do not repay anyone evil for evil', this, 'but leave room for God's wrath'. Leave room for God's wrath! There are certain things, like Jesus on the cross, that we have to take - and we read in 1 Peter 2 that this is how the Lord Jesus coped: 'When He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to God who judges righteously; who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree'. So what He did was, He said: 'Lord, I'm not going to take vengeance myself at this unjust act, I am offering it up to You, the Just Judge' - that's what we're meant to do.

Forgiveness is not forgetting, forgiveness is living with the consequences of another person's sin. Three: forgiveness is choosing not to hold someone's sin against them. It's letting them off your hook, it's a choice, and putting them onto God. It's not them getting off scot-free, but it means that you're not holding your right to judge them, but you're placing them onto God's hook.

Now maybe you're sitting here saying: 'I don't feel like forgiving them'. Well, here's the fourth misunderstanding: forgiveness cannot wait until you feel like it, it's a choice, it's a decision of your will. I want you to understand that if you wait until you feel like it, you'll never do it. You've got to choose to forgive - and here's how it works, I want you to understand: whenever we have held bitterness towards another, or in the matter of oppression wherever we have given a foothold to the devil, when we choose to confess it, or we choose to forgive someone, and we declare it - I believe we need to declare it audibly, because the devil can't read your mind, only God is all-knowing. I believe you need to declare it verbally. When you do that, Satan loses power over you in that area, and God will be able to come in and start to heal those damaged emotions - but you've got to choose it. If you sit around waiting until you feel like it, it will never happen. You must choose with the will to forgive.

Then fifthly and finally: forgiveness must come from the heart. What I mean by that is: it must touch the emotional core of your being. That means you mustn't suppress your emotions. When you come to the Lord and say: 'Lord, I confess I have bitterness in my heart towards', whoever it is, however long the list is - let the emotions, let the hurt,

let all the scars come to the surface - because the problem you're in is because you've been pushing it down, and suppressing it. You need to let it all come out in the presence of Christ, the Healer and Redeemer, that He might touch you and restore you! You got to allow God to bring the painful memories to the surface - but, you see, we find this hard, particularly the men among us, because we don't want to lose it, especially in public. We don't want to start blurting or anything. Friends, we've got to get over this.

There's a lot of buried stuff, and you need to acknowledge how you feel towards those who have hurt you - and when that is done, when it really comes out of the heart, then the Lord can come in and really heal. He will change you from the inside out! In Acts chapter 19 we have exorcists, boys trying to exorcise demons who weren't even saved, and they were mimicking Paul, trying to do it the way Paul did. The demons cried out, and they said: 'Paul we know, but who are you? Who are you? Jesus we know, and Paul we know, but who are you?'. It says in my version - my own made up one! - the demons gave them a good hiding, that's what happened! The demons beat these men up. Fear came upon all the people in Ephesus when they saw this - do you know why? Because some of them were still dabbling, some of these Christians - and do you know what we read? Look at it quickly as we close, Acts chapter 19 verses 19 and 20, verse 18 says: 'Many who had believed', had believed, 'came confessing and telling their deeds'. So they had already believed, but they're now coming out with the things they had been dabbling in: 'Also, many of those who had practiced magic brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted up the value of them, and it totaled fifty thousand pieces of silver'. Now let me do a quick equation here: these were drachma, a drachma was more than likely a day's wage. The Internet tells me, I don't know how true it is, that a day's wage is 95 quid in the United Kingdom - that's a bit steep, I think, but anyway. If you multiply that day's wage by 50,000, do you know what you get? 4,750,000 pounds! That was the worth, in our equivalence today, of all these articles of the occult - but they burned them to get free. Look at verse 20, because of this: 'So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed'.

There is a price to be paid, but what a result! Is there a price for you to pay to be free of the devil's oppression? Is it a profession, a career? Is it a relationship? Is it an addiction? You know, it's not going to be easy - but you know there's a price to pay for dealing with unforgiveness: pride. Are there any folk here tonight who will admit that they are not living life as God intended because of a foothold or stronghold that the devil has that you have given him, or because of unforgiveness in your heart toward another, toward yourself, resentment toward God? I don't know who it is, and I'm not minimising your pain, but what I am saying to you tonight is: you need to forgive if you want joy of the Lord.

Let us all pray. If any of you want to speak to me about this tonight, if this has touched any of your lives, do take time here to deal with it and get released. Even now, just where you are praying, do you know what you could say to the Lord, where you are - it would be better to do it audibly, maybe we will just do that now, do this audibly. All of us do it together, to help those who may have issues here, especially with forgiveness. Just say: 'Lord, I choose to forgive', and name the person - now obviously you don't want to shout it out, just take it on your lips, nobody need hear you roundabout but it is audible - but all of us together, say this together with me, all of you to help those here. 'Lord, I choose to forgive', and just take the person's name,

or people's names, or yourself, 'for', and tell the Lord what they have done, whisper to the Lord, 'for', 'which made me feel', tell the Lord how you felt, 'which made me feel', and tell what the Lord brings to your mind. Maybe you are someone who has been resentful toward the Lord, well, say this, all of us together: 'Lord, I am sorry for blaming You', and tell Him what happened or what didn't happen, and repeat, 'I know You don't want to harm me. Please forgive me'.

Now repeat this prayer with me, a prayer of release from unforgiveness: 'Lord, I choose not to hold onto my resentment. I thank You for setting me free from the bondage of my bitterness. I let go of my right to seek revenge, and ask You to heal my damaged emotions. I now I ask You to bless', and name the person, 'I thank You that You love me and accept me, and I choose to accept Your forgiveness in Christ. In Jesus' name, Amen'.

Now if there is demonic oppression, let's pray one more prayer please, because I want people not to go out of here and not be free. I know we're taking up time, but this is important for people who are struggling. Let's say it together to help them: 'Lord, I confess I have dabbled in', and you name it before the Lord, take it on your lips quietly, 'I confess it is sin, I repent and forsake it. I renounce the devil and his works, and I plead the blood of Christ that this should have no hold on me. I ask You, in Jesus' name, to deliver me, and I ask You to fill me with Your Holy Spirit. Help me now to resist the devil, that he may flee from me. Amen'. Amen.

Transcribed by Andrew Watkins, Preach The Word - November 2011
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Life As God Intends For His People - Chapter 6
**"Life Free From The Enemy - Part 2:
 Fear And Anxiety"**

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Life As God Intends For His People' - we've covered quite a bit of ground, I'm sure you'll agree. We looked on Sunday evening at 'Life Eternal', this life of God that has been deposited into our souls. We looked on Monday night at 'Life Empowered By The Spirit', and how we need to be endued with power from on high, that there is that experience taught within the word of God - and we each need our personal Pentecost; and the fullness of the Spirit, as that is maintained, and the fruit of the Spirit manifest in our lives. Then Tuesday night we looked at how our life is to be a 'Life Of Grace Not Law', we are to live a life of faith through the grace of God, not particularly any code or old covenant, but the Holy Spirit's power in our lives through the grace of God. Then Wednesday night we looked at how this life as God intends is to be a 'Life Of Hearing God', hearing from God, and mainly through the scriptures, but not only through the scriptures. We looked at that little verse in John 10: 'My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me' - what it is to hear, internally, the voice of God, as His Spirit witnesses with our spirit that we are children of God.

Then last night we began two parts of 'Life Free From The Enemy'. We looked last night - and some lives were truly touched last evening - as we looked at freedom from the oppression of the devil, demonic oppression, and unforgiveness. That was a huge area, but tonight's is equally as large, because tonight we're again looking at 'Life Free From The Enemy', but regarding fear and anxiety - it's a massive one, and we're going to take the time tonight to deal with it. I'm sure it affects many of you gathered here this evening.

So we're turning our Bibles to Philippians, Paul's Epistle to the Philippians, chapter 4. If you have a copy of the word of God, do open it there, and also I would encourage you, please, to take notes if you can. Of course these meetings are recorded, so if you haven't got pen and paper you could get the recording and go over it in detail - but while you're here, and while the Holy Spirit is moving in our midst, it would be good for you to jot down some of these things, particularly some of the things that speak to you personally. Now I'm in a bit of a panic today - I'm going to talk about fear and worry, but I just wanted to know: is this Ballymoney water I'm drinking? Because if there's any ill effects, you'll be getting a solicitor's letter! I hope this is boiled, is it? Holy water!? Well, I'm going to trust the Lord that it is holy water!

Verse 6 please: *"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy; meditate on these things. The things which you learned and received and heard and*

saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you".

Now I've invited you each night to pray with me, and pray for yourself. God has been moving this week, and we give Him all the praise and all the glory. He's a God of Grace, and without Him we can do nothing - but He has been pleased to visit us this week, I believe, and touch people's hearts and speak to us. He has been really speaking to me through the ministry, and let's make tonight no exception. This is a problem, I know, with many: fear and anxiety. Let's come and open our hearts and say: 'Lord, speak to me, and minister to me in this area'.

Father, we thank You for Your holy word. We thank You that it is the power of God, we thank You, Lord, that it is as a two-edged sword, dividing the very bone and marrow, soul and spirit. It is the discerner of men's hearts, and the intents of their heart. So, Lord, we come tonight again and, as we prayed last evening, we ask: search me, O God, and know my heart, and see if there be any anxious way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. Lord, this is a vast problem, and it's certainly a problem that has been devastating in my life - but I thank You for deliverance through the blood of Jesus. I thank You for the victory that we have through the Lord Jesus, that we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us, died for us, was buried and rose again, and who is with us as our Great High Priest by the power of the Holy Spirit. Lord, we pray tonight that the victory of Jesus and the power of the blood and the Emancipator will be here tonight to deliver. Lord, we quoted it to You last night, where the Lord Jesus opened the book in the synagogue at the prophet Isaiah, He opened the scroll, and He read: 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, for He has anointed Me to preach glad tidings to the poor, to heal the brokenhearted, to set at liberty the captives, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord'. He sat down, closed the book, and sat down and said: 'Today is this Scripture fulfilled in your hearing'. Lord, we believe the Lord Jesus Christ is the glorious Emancipator, and we pray that tonight He would come and set people free for His glory alone - as we ask now for the help of the Holy Spirit, in His all-victorious name we pray, Amen.

'Life As God Intends For His People' is a life free from fear and anxiety. These are two of the greatest problems in believer's lives today. In fact, fear and anxiety, I would say, are at epidemic proportions in our society. Now you only have to look at the headlines, particularly - I need to be careful, I'll be getting sued if I don't watch - but there are certain red-top papers, and they use sensational headlines on a daily basis. One in particular, and if you tell me what the headline is, I deliberately will not believe it! That's true - because it's scaremongering. Wherever we look, even watching the news at times can get you all nervous with the scares, the health scares, terror scares, and economic scares, and so on and so forth.

Fear and anxiety is a major cause of mental and physical ill-health. A wife once rung the doctor one morning, and said: 'Doctor, come quick, it's my husband!'. He says: 'What's wrong?'. 'Well, he got up this morning, he took his vitamin pill, then he took his appetite suppressant, his antidepressant, his tranquilliser. He took his antihistamine, and then some Valium'. He says: 'Well, what's wrong?'. 'Well, he lit up a cigarette, and there was an explosion!'. Now we know that smoking kills, don't we? But how often do you hear people say: 'Anxiety kills'? It does. It's a well-established fact that stress contributes to people becoming physically ill. Mental, emotional and spiritual problems are often at the root of illness. In fact, there is a minimum estimate that 50% of illness is psychosomatic. Now that does not mean it's all in your head, but

it means it can be derived from mental and emotional problems. You will even hear statistics as high as 75% of illnesses being derived from problems in the mind and in the heart.

But if fear and anxiety are physically and mentally devastating, how much more spiritually devastating are these problems? Because fear and anxiety robs the believer of many of the benefits of the blessings of the Gospel of Christ that He has given us in His grace. Not only does it rob us of our blessing, but it paralyses us for service. We find that our usefulness is diminished because we are in the grip of fear and worry.

Now I hope you dear folk know, and we touched on this on Sunday night - we looked at John 10, didn't we? Jesus said: 'I give unto My sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish'. The devil cannot take away your salvation, thank the Lord for that! But what he can do, what he knows he can do, and what he seeks to do is: rob you of the benefits, here and now, of your walk with God. Two of the greatest ways he does this, and two of his most successful weapons in his arsenal, are fear and anxiety. One of the reasons why they are so powerful is that we readily cooperate with him. Some of you here, even tonight, this could describe you: you have a love-hate relationship with fear and anxiety. You can live with it, but you can't live without it - isn't that true? It becomes like a sort of security blanket, where you would almost feel that you were irresponsible about your life if you weren't concerned about something.

I used to be like that. If I hadn't something to worry about, I got worried why I hadn't something to worry about. Is that you? I would go as far as to say that many people, including many believers, have a love affair with fear and anxiety. It is a common pet sin for Christians. I think that's probably for two reasons. First of all: it seems a less immoral sin than many others. In our contrived list of more serious sins - which doesn't exist, by the way - we maybe have murder at the top, or something like that, or rape, child abuse; the top ten list of most heinous sins. Well, I would almost guarantee you that you wouldn't have worry up there with any of them - yet the fact of the matter is, the Bible is very clear that it is serious to be fearful and anxious, for it is essentially unbelief. The book of Romans teaches us that whatever is not from faith is sin, and so worry is sin. But we tend to think that because it's not a 'dirty sin', and it's a bit of a secret sin - nobody else need know about it, it can be going on in our heads and our hearts - we don't think it is so serious.

The second reason why this is probably the Christian's pet sin is: it's often attributed to a person's personality, or even their family trait. You know, you say: 'Well, I'm just in the melancholic category, it's just the way I am. I've always been like this, my mother was like it before me, and my granny before her - it has just been a family trait. It's the way I am, and I'm hardly going to change. It has been like that through the generations'. Now, I have no doubt in my mind that there often is a generational aspect to this sin. Sometimes we are taught to fear by our parents. I remember hearing of a young girl who grew up to be a woman terrified of spiders, and any time she saw a spider she would jump onto a chair. She received some counselling for this, and was asked where this fear of spiders began, and she said: 'Well, it began one day when my mother opened the oven to put in some baking, and this big spider crawled out'. The counsellor said: 'Well, were you afraid?'. She said: 'No'. She said: 'What happened?'. She said: 'Well, I looked at my mother, and she jumped on the chair and screamed, so then that's what I did' - and ever since that she had a fear of spiders. Now we can laugh at that, but we have to realise that you can be taught as a child to

fear and to worry by your parents, or your grandparents, or another guardian - and that has to be broken.

There can even be a spirit of fear, and I believe in a literal demonic spirit of fear. There is a human spirit of fretfulness that the Bible talks about, but I do believe that we can give way in our lives to demonic spirits of fear that can get a hold on us through various means. All of these need to be broken, but I have to tell you: to plead to your personality, or family history, as a reason why you are a worrier is really a copout. It breeds resignation. It makes you say: 'Well, hands up, I can't do anything, and I'm just going to be like this till the day I die' - when it is sin and, more importantly: life as God intends for you is a life free from the domination of fear and anxiety.

So let's deal first of all with fear. Now it's difficult for us not to be fearful, and the simple reason is: fear is a natural part of life. You may not realise this, but fear is actually a gift from God. Instinctively we fear getting hit by a car crossing the road, that's why we look right and we look left. We fear when we're putting a block on the stove, lest we get our fingers burnt. It's a gift from God, but the problem comes whenever our fears get out of proportion - and that's often what we mean when we talk about fear. So it's good to be a little bit afraid of getting hit by a car crossing the road, but whenever the fear of getting hit by a bus stops you going out your front door - that's when the fear has grown out of proportion. This is an interesting thought, because it could be broadened out and applied in various ways, how Satan uses some very powerful gifts that God has given us for our detriment and for sin. I'm not going to go into this tonight, but one of the greatest blessings that God has given humanity is the gift of sexual intimacy. Like fear, it is very powerful, and Satan knows both the power of fear and the power of sex; and he capitalises on them, gifts from God that are pure, but that he uses to our detriment and to his exaltation.

So really - maybe I'm confusing you - but it's important to understand that not all fear is wrong, it's when fear gets out of proportion. Here's something for you to remember as a principle: fear is meant to be your servant, not your master. Turn with me to 2 Timothy, please, chapter 1 verse 7. Now Paul is talking here about fear out of proportion: 'For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind'. So let me ask you a question: if the word of God says that God has not given us a spirit of fear, who has given us a spirit of fear? The devil, or demons, or this world system - but ultimately it is not of God. Now I have to tell you that one of the keys of overcoming fear and anxiety is knowing its source, knowing where it is coming from, knowing your enemy, knowing that it is a fiery dart that he is using to set your soul ablaze. Satan's arrow of fear comes in many forms. Some people have a fear of the devil to such an extent that they have magnified the devil's power over God's. It was Corrie Ten Boom who said: 'The fear of demons comes from demons' - that's right! As we have quoted on previous nights: Jesus is stronger than Satan, and Satan to Jesus must bow.

We are on the winning side. He that is in us is greater than he that is in the world, and yet we can be terrified! Maybe you were terrified last night when I talked about demonic oppression, but we ought not to be terrified. Some people have a paralysing fear of death, even some Christians - they ought not, but let's be honest, some of them do. Some people have a fear of never being loved, or being left on the shelf. Some people end up applying that to the Divine, and they think that they are not accepted by God because they don't measure up, or because of something in their

past, or they feel that they have to achieve in order for God to smile upon them. They're afraid that God is angry with them. Some people have a fear of being childless, a fear of other people's disapproval, trying to live up to the expectations of another. Some have fear of failure, some of our dear young people are struggling with fear over their sexuality in a generation that's told it's acceptable to be homosexual, bisexual, transsexual - you name it. They're confused, as they're growing up, going through puberty, all sorts of hormones rushing and raging, and temptations before them in a society that tells them: 'Just go and do whatever you feel like!'. They have a great fear. How could you not have a fear of financial insecurity in this present credit crisis? People have a general fear of the future, what it holds - or maybe your fear tonight is a fear of a specific person, or an object.

Well, listen, whatever your fear is this evening, the root of any unreasonable fear is a belief that is not based on truth. Let me repeat that: the root of any unreasonable fear is a belief that is not based on truth. In other words, it's based on a lie - that's how you know the source, because Jesus called Satan 'the father of lies'. He has told you a lie, and you have believed that lie. Let's take the example of the person who has a natural fear of getting hit by a bus, but it doesn't make them cautious crossing the road, it prevents them going out their door. Now they have believed a lie from the devil, the lie is that they are safer inside than they are outside - that's one lie, but sure something could happen to them inside. Another lie is that people are getting hit by buses all the time. People are very rarely getting hit by buses - and yet they have believed this lie, and this fear has grown out of all proportion and paralysed them. But what I want you understand tonight is: when you believe a lie, you enter into an agreement with Satan - this is very important - which is essentially like signing a contract, just like Adam and Eve did in the Garden. They believed the lie of the devil that God had not said they would surely die if they ate of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and they believed a further lie from the devil that they would be like God if they ate it. By obeying through their will on the basis of the lie of the devil, they signed a contract with Satan - and we saw it last night - they effectively relinquished their authority over creation and gave it to the devil, and that's why he is now the god of this world.

Now I want to say to you that if you believe a lie of the devil in your life regarding fear and anxiety, you are, as it were, entering into an agreement with the devil. You're signing a contract so that he will have power over you to intimidate you and terrorise you in that particular area. Are you with me? At the root of every controlling fear is a lie. Now if you have a problem with fear and anxiety tonight, I want you to do something just now. I want you to pray to God from your spirit, and ask God to reveal to you, by the Holy Spirit, the lie that you have believed, and the corresponding truth of the word of God that will counteract that lie. Would you do that just now? Just from your heart say: 'Lord, what is the lie whereby I have entered into an agreement with Satan over an untruth that is terrorising me and destroying me? I want You to show me the corresponding truth from Your word to counteract that lie'.

Now, we haven't got time to look at Ephesians chapter 6, we touched on it last evening: the armour of God. There's the helmet of salvation for your mind, your head; the breastplate of righteousness for your emotions; the girdle of truth that holds all the other pieces of the armour up, we are founded on the truth; feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace - wherever we go we should know the peace of God; but we should stand firm in the victory of Christ Jesus, and we should be ready to

give an answer to any man who asks us a question - the shield of faith to quench the fiery darts of the evil one. But the only offensive, attacking weapon we have is the word of God, the sword of the Spirit. The word that is used in Ephesians 6 for 'sword' is not a big broadsword like you would see some of the warriors using in a movie, but they are small type daggers. There would have been an array of them in a soldier's armoury - in other words, he would have chosen which particular dagger to use on an occasion. The word for 'word of God' in Ephesians 6 is the word 'rema', not the word 'logos'. 'Logos' is used in John chapter 1, 'The Word was with God, and was God'. In Ephesians 6 the word is 'rema', which means 'the spoken word of God'. So put all that together: a specific truth from the Scriptures, not just the whole Bible, but a specific truth to counteract the lies of the devil - and sometimes, and more often than not, I would encourage you to speak it verbally to the devil, because he cannot read your mind, you need to speak it.

The lie isn't always obvious, it can even be subconscious. It can be a belief that you've learned from childhood, it can even be a fear that entered you through a tragic experience. Often it can happen through accidents - but a common denominator is often this: this fear entered you at a time where you felt vulnerable. Are you with me? You felt unprotected, and because of the vulnerability and the lack of protection - maybe a guardian let you down, father or mother, or grandparent, or somebody else that was meant to be looking after you, maybe it was a husband or wife - because they let you down, you felt exposed, and then the fear entered at that moment because you felt you weren't covered. The fear came in at that moment, and it has grabbed you and gripped you and controlled you from then on.

You see, the subtle lie that we believe on such occasions is: God is not in control. Even as believers, because something bad happens, or an accident, or some kind of tragedy, we conclude: 'I am not protected. No matter what I sing, no matter what I've talked about, and prayed, and hear from the pulpit, obviously God is not in control here. God is not protecting me, I'm exposed! I'm vulnerable!'. All of a sudden, when we think like that, there's a fiery dart of the evil one comes in: fear. You see that arrow? It's very hard to get out, because it's as if we've signed a contract with the evil one for it to be there. Now listen, the answer for this problem is the same for any of these types of fear, and it's simply this: you've got to confess it to God. Now, do you know what 'confession' actually means? We use a lot of theological and evangelical terms, and we don't explain them. Do you know what 'confession' means? It means 'agreement'. Confession in a court of law is when the accused put his hands up and says: 'Guilty as charged', and he agrees with the judge. When you confess to God, you are - this is very powerful, the power of confession - you are agreeing with God instead of agreeing with the lies of the devil. Are you following me now? The power of agreement in the spiritual realm is phenomenal! For the power that will control your life is the power that you agree with! So confession is agreeing with God, His truth, what He says - not what the devil says, not what the world says, not what your mind will tell you.

You confess, and then you repent - yes, you repent of fear. You confess it as sin, and you repent, you change your mind about it and you renounce the lies of the devil. Renunciation is very important if you have believed a lie. If a fear has come in like a fiery dart because of some tragic experience when you were not covered, and you felt vulnerable, and you felt God was not in control, you must confess that. You must also rebuke, if there is a spirit of fear that is doing this to you, if there is a demonic source - but ultimately here is the answer to fear and anxiety: you must believe God! You

must take God's protection by faith.

Am I speaking to someone here, and you have been very vulnerable in the past? You've maybe gone through some of these experiences that I have talked about, maybe even abuse. You've lived your whole life trying to protect yourself, because you've got to look out for yourself - nobody else is going to do it, everybody else has let you down that you've ever put your trust in. But that has brought you to the place where you're like the hedgehog, and you curl up and all the prickles go out, and God can't even get in to you now. You haven't got the peace of God because you're looking after yourself, because you're afraid, you don't think there is any protection for you. Listen, my friend: you need to stop listening to the lies of the devil! He wants to rob you of the joy, and the peace, and the love of God that God has for you, that has been bought for you through the blood of Jesus. You've got to, tonight, once and for all, confess your sin, repent of it, renounce fear, renounce however it got into your life, renounce the spirit of fear that might be upon you, and believe God and take His protection over you, and enter into contract with Him!

Practically, to do that, you need a plan of action. It's alright doing it on a night like tonight, but you need a plan of action: what are you going to do the next time this fear comes at you, this flying arrow? Well, I often describe it to people like this: it's as if, when you get up in the morning, there are two postmen come to your door, and each of them has a parcel. One postman is from the devil, and he's got a parcel from the accuser. The other postman is from the Lord, and he's got a parcel from the word of God. It's all down to which parcel you receive, which parcel you open, which parcel you untie and imbibe, and believe and accept!

This might sound elementary stuff, but you know: I never cease to be amazed - and I, myself, have been very guilty of this in the past - it's astounding how God's people will believe anybody but God, isn't it? We certainly believe the devil a lot when he tells you: 'You're no good! You're useless! You're damaged goods! You've burned your bridges! You don't measure up! God is not pleased with you! You're a rubbish mother, a rubbish father!'. He reminds you of the sins you've done in the past, and tells you that you are no good as a Christian because of them - and we believe him, don't we? Sure we believe anybody - I mentioned the papers today - we believe the papers, and we should know better, shouldn't we? We believe the BBC News like gospel truth. I have to be careful of the company here tonight, but we believe politicians as well! Now some of them are to be believed, but you know what I'm trying to say, don't you? We find it very hard believing God, don't we? Just accepting what God says as truth and building our life upon it - but didn't Jesus say that 'It's when the storm comes, raging, that the one who has built their life on My sayings, their house will stand'? But we struggle with this, that's why Jesus, He called it 'childlike faith' because the child, if you tell a child anything they will believe you. Now we're not talking about gullible belief, but there is an illustration there of how simply a child will accept what is being said, and we as children of God are meant to be the same regarding our Heavenly Father. We are meant to just accept Him, agree with God. Listen: fear of God abolishes all other fears.

You remember the cowboy films, and you know the two boys square up to one another in the middle of the street and everybody disappears. They're walking up to one another, and one says: 'This town ain't big enough for the both of us!' - you know that talk. Well, that's the way fear and faith are in the heart. The heart is not big enough

for the both of them. Fear will extinguish faith - but, praise God, faith will extinguish fear; but you cannot have both. If you give in at all to fear, it will overcome your heart, and it will push faith completely out. They are mutually exclusive, that's why you must venture your all on the promises of and the word of God. You must enter into complete agreement with the Lord.

That's fear, let's look at anxiety for a moment. Anxiety is slightly different than fear at times, because anxiety often lacks an adequate cause. Fear can be a genuine fear blown out of all proportion, but anxiety generally can happen for no reason whatsoever. We imagine it. Do you know what I mean? It's like the woman who worried for 50 years that she was going to die of cancer, and at 70 she died of pneumonia - and she wasted 50 years worrying about the wrong thing. It's true, isn't it? The things we worry about, and are careful and anxious about, are things that almost never happen.

Now, again, concern is a good thing, isn't it? We are concerned about things that we value, and so it motivates us to look after them - whether it's our children, or possessions, or whatever. It's natural, whenever you're going into an exam, to be nervous - isn't it? When you're going to the doctor's surgery to get your blood pressure done, it's natural that it's a bit because you're going to the doctor's. But the problem comes when, because of overt concern about the future, we lose out on the present, that it prevents us functioning today. Often the things we worry about, we don't even know what the outcome is going to be. You see, worry robs us of today by stressing out about tomorrow. That's why Jesus said three times, in fact, I say 'He said', He commanded us three times in Matthew chapter 6: 'Do not worry', 'Do not worry', and in fact the third time He said, 'Do not worry about tomorrow, sufficient for the day is its own trouble'.

Corrie Ten Boom was in a concentration camp imprisoned by the Germans, and of course her sister Betsy was killed and all of her family. In the last few years of her life, this is something she said: 'Worry does not empty tomorrow of sorrows, it empties today of strength'. Jesus said: 'Here's why you shouldn't worry - apart from the fact that it's unbelief - it doesn't work!'. Isn't that what He said? You can't add one cubit to your stature, or one day to your longevity, by worrying! It doesn't do anything except destroy you from the inside out!

Worry is first of all based on assumptions, rather than facts. You assume something is going to happen. What's the thing you're worrying about tonight? Is it a fact? I guarantee it's not, it's an assumption, it's what you think might happen - but it's not a fact. If it's not a fact, it's not worth concerning yourself over. But another thing which worry is motivated from is: you have this assertion that things are somehow under your control. Now I know, deep down you know they're not - but if you would only accept that they are not in your control, you wouldn't worry about them, because you know that you have no power over those things, the outcome of which has not been determined yet. Do you understand? You must face this twofold. One: don't concern yourself about assumptions, only be concerned about facts. Two: things that are out of your jurisdiction - and I say this very politely to you - are none of your business!

Have you got a problem tonight with anxiety? Well, the answer is the same as the answer for fear: it's faith in God and the promises of His word. Now, in these moments that remain I want you to go to Philippians chapter 4, because there we have a

medicine bottle with directions for fear and anxiety written on it. There are fivefold instructions here how to overcome fear and anxiety. Here's the first in verse 6: worry about nothing. 'Be anxious for nothing' - be anxious for nothing! We are to worry about nothing, here's the reason, let me reiterate it: worry is sin. Do you know what John Wesley said: 'I would no more worry than I would curse or swear'. That's not the way we think of it, is it? Just like any other sin, it robs us of the peace of God. F.B. Meyer, the Bible scholar, said that the English word 'anxiety' comes from the root of the word 'anger'. It actually refers to the physical act of choking! That's exactly what worry does to us, and fear, it chokes the life out of us! It takes the joy away! Do you know that feeling? I knew it for years, and I would still know it if I let my guard down today away from the promises of God: you feel like you're wrung, like a wet rag, inside. Your insides are taught and tied and uptight - that's what worry does, anxiousness.

In fact, the Lord Jesus taught in the parable of the sower and the seeds, and the different soils - you remember that one in Matthew chapter 13 - that anxiety prevents the word of God taking root in our lives because, and here's what He said: 'The care of this world chokes the word, and it becomes unfruitful' - there it is! It chokes out your vitality, that's what the devil wants to do! He wants to rob you of your joy, your peace, and love in Christ so that you will not enter into the blessings and you will be useless for the kingdom of God. You see this expression in verse 6, 'Be anxious for nothing', be careful for nothing - it's the same expression that the Lord uses in Matthew 6 when He says: 'Take no thought', it's the exact same expression. 'Take no thought what you shall eat, what you shall drink, what you shall put on - don't worry about it'. Someone translated it like this: 'Do not, under any circumstances, worry about anything' - there's a command of the Lord Jesus. How do you fare on that one? Do not, under any circumstances, worry about anything.

It's a command that is unconditional, there's no loophole or caveat. It's unlimited: worry about nothing. Now listen carefully to what I'm going to say: I believe that you need to have satisfied insatiability in the Christian life. In other words, you should always be following hard after God, and you should be satisfied in Jesus - but you should be always going on and wanting more. But there's a lot of people, and they're robbed of what they have already, because they're fretting that much that they're not spiritual enough. Do you know what I'm talking about? This applies to worrying about your spirituality, it does. I'm not saying don't take heed to yourself, you know that that's not what I'm saying - but what I am saying is: you're not permitted to worry about your spiritual life, you're not permitted to worry about your friends and your relatives. You're to pray for them, you're to agonise over them, you're to wrestle with the burden of them before God in prayer - but you're not to worry about your answers to prayer either, because worry is not trust, it's the opposite. Even over the highest and holiest things, you're not permitted to worry!

Maybe there's someone here tonight, and God is robbing you of your peace because you're worried about unsaved loved ones, or you're worried about a prodigal son or a wayward daughter. Well, it's right for you to be concerned, but not to the extent that it robs you of your peace, for that's the devil's work. Scripture consistently forbids it: worry about nothing. Now, that is a command, so that means you have to engage with your will. You've to decide to worry about nothing. Will you do that tonight? Because we needn't go any further into the four other instructions on the medicine bottle if you're not going to do the first, to decide and determine to worry about nothing.

Here's the second instruction: pray about everything. 'Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God'. Now, when I said to you that you have to engage your will and decide not to worry, I know some of you are sitting there saying: 'Well, that's easier said than done! I mean, do you just switch a button and that's it, you stop?'. You're right, you can't just zap those fears and anxieties to disappear - but here's the spiritual mechanism whereby you do this: you 'Don't worry' by turning your cares into prayers, and turning them over to God, that's how you 'Don't worry' and decide not to worry; by deciding to bring your burdens, and take them to the Lord, and leave them there, and tell the Lord about them. Pray about everything - is that what you do? I know what naturally I often do whenever there's a crisis entered my life, or something is going on, or I have a problem - one of the instincts I have is to lift the phone and ring somebody who I respect, or who I know I'll get good advice from, or who'll tell me what I want to hear. But you know what I'm trying to say: sometimes the last person that we go to is God.

Let me ask you tonight: the thing that you're fretting about as you sit in the seat in this meeting, have you gone to God about it? Have you really gone to God about it? We're to pray about everything! You might say: 'But does He not know already? I mean, Jesus even said in the Sermon on the Mount, 'Your Heavenly Father knows the things that you have need before you ask Him''. Of course He knows, He knows everything - but what you're missing is: praying about everything is an act of faith on your part. It's communicating to God that, 'I am giving it over to You' - He doesn't need to know! Sometimes you'd think, with the prayers you hear in the prayer meeting, that God didn't know about what was going on in the world, wouldn't you? He knows everything, but He wants us to relinquish the burden over to Him. We do that through prayer, and what a gift it is. It's an act of faith. The Psalmist said in Psalm 55:22: 'Cast your burden on the LORD, and He will sustain you; He shall not suffer the righteous to be moved'. Do you know what that means? Throw your burden on the Lord - throw your burden! Cast it away onto the Lord! Lay it on the Lord! It has the sense: 'Roll it over on to Him'.

A New Testament equivalent of that verse in the Psalms is 1 Peter 5:7: 'Casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you'. J.B. Phillips translated it like this: 'You can throw the whole weight of your anxieties upon Him, for you are His personal concern'. You are His care! Is that what you do? Or do you carry it on your own back? I can see it's on some of your backs here tonight. Worry about nothing, pray about everything, cast it over onto Him - do you understand what this means? A wife said to a husband: 'Why can't you sleep?'. He said: 'Oh dear, I owe Sam next door £1000, and he wants me to pay it back to him tomorrow and I haven't got the money. I just don't have the money', and he rung his hands, and the sweat was on his brow, and his knees were knocking. The wife jumped out of bed, and she opened the bedroom window, and she stuck her head out and shouted: 'Sam! Sam!' - and Sam got up all groggy, and he mumbled, 'What is it?'. She says: 'You know that thousand pounds my husband owes you? He doesn't have it!', and she shut the window. She says: 'Now you go to sleep, and let him worry about it!'. That's what we're meant to do with God - seriously: cast your care upon Him, for His care is you.

There was a man and he was terribly troubled with anxiety, and everybody knew him for it. One day he was walking along the town whistling and singing, and the people looked at him and said: 'That can't be the same man!'. They stopped him and said:

'What's wrong with you, that you're not worrying?'. He said: 'Well, I'm paying a man to worry for me' - that's right! 'You're doing what?'. 'Paying a man'. 'How much are you paying him?'. '£2000 a day'. 'Where are you getting that?'. He says: 'That's not my problem!'. Friends, we're laughing at that, but there is a great truth there, isn't there? If God is in control, and God cares about you, why are you staying up all night late into the wee small hours, when He who neither slumbers nor sleeps is covering you? Now listen, we either believe it or we don't - and this is our problem: we don't! We believe it up here, but not in here.

We need to pray about everything, cast it all onto the Lord - here's the third thing: worry about nothing, pray about everything, but be thankful for anything. That's what it says here, look - this prayer is not ordinary prayer, it's praiseful prayer: 'Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God' - this is praiseful. It's like Isaiah says: 'He gives us the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness', and I have found this a great balm in my Christian life. Whenever I feel the heaviness of fear and anxiety approaching, I learn to praise God and it disappears!

You remember Daniel, he's a wonderful illustration of this, how he found peace through praise when the King announced that none of his subjects was to pray to anyone except the King. Daniel immediately went to his room, he flung the window open, and he prayed as he always had before - in Daniel 6 we read it. But look at his prayer, Daniel 6 and verse 10 we read: 'He prayed and gave thanks before his God'. This is a man who was almost certain that the action that he had begun in praying as usual was going to get him thrown into a den of lions, but he was able to pray to his God with thanksgiving. That is the reason why, listen: he could sleep with the lions, and the King was kept up all night.

Do you practice thanksgiving? Can I tell you: faith does not flourish in the atmosphere of pessimism and gloom. Now I believe in desperate praying, and I believe God, at times, only answers desperate prayer - but sometimes our desperation in prayer gives way to unbelief. It would depress you. Many a prayer meeting, I come out worse than I went in - that's the honest truth! Many a church service - do you ever feel like that? But the atmosphere of praise, it draws God, for it is filled with faith when you aspire to the characteristics of God in worship and His accomplishments. You're lifted into the heavenlies, and you realise what your God can do and who He is! You start to praise in prayer - well, what a remedy for care, fear, and anxiety that is! Someone said: 'If a life full of care is filled with prayer, and if that prayer is filled with praise, it will result in peace'.

Do you practice thankfulness and praise in singing? Even singing in private? Thankfulness is a hard thing, especially being thankful for anything - that's what he's saying here, being thankful for anything. I heard a story recently about a man who lost his wallet, a Christian, and he was able to be thankful - I don't know if he was from Ballymoney, mind you! Here's how he was thankful, he said that in four ways he was thankful, listen: 'One: he wasn't hurt' - isn't that something to be thankful for? 'Two: there wasn't much money in the wallet. Three: it had never happened before. Four: he wasn't the thief'. You see, you can do it - but we are so predisposed to negativity, aren't we, and pessimism, and unbelief? We need to practice thanksgiving.

Here's the fourth thing. Not only worry about nothing, pray about everything, be

thankful for anything, but think about good things. Verse 8: 'Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy; meditate on these things'. Now in verse 6 we were told 'do not think about negative things', and now in verses 8 and 9 we're being told 'think about positive things'. The word 'think' here is the Greek word 'logizomai', which means 'dwell on'. Don't dwell on bad things, dwell on good things! Here's the reason why: there is a battle on for the mind of the believer, that is the battlefield of the enemy! He wants to conquer our thoughts, because it's our thoughts that determine our feelings, and it's our feelings that determine our actions. If he can conquer the mind-gate, he has conquered the whole man!

Do you have negative thoughts? Are you plagued with negative thoughts? Not all of them are your own, perhaps, the devil often sends thoughts into our minds. He can do that, he can't read our minds, but he can plant thoughts in our minds - but the more we try to weed them out, you know what it's like, the more the thoughts come. But look, it doesn't say in this passage, the medicine bottle's instruction does not say: 'Wrestle these bad thoughts', does it? Because if you do that, that's a sure way of aggravating those thoughts, and you'll get yourself into all sorts of trouble. What it says rather is: 'Cultivate good thoughts'. This is what the Bible calls 'renewing your mind'. It means replacing the bad thoughts with the good thoughts, pouring good thoughts in that will push the bad thoughts out.

There are eight things to pour into your mind here, Paul says. Fix your thoughts on what is true. Is what you're worrying about true? Fix your mind on things that are honourable, right, pure. Is that what you're thinking about? Lovely, admirable, think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise. Now listen: positive thoughts don't come naturally, do they? That's why you must determine to do it, and you can my friend! Listen: one of the blood-bought rights of the child of God is a renewed mind - but a lot of believers have a saved soul, and a mind that has never been changed.

'I beseech you therefore, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God'. You worry about the will of God? Well, renew your mind! What do you pour into your mind? Let's be honest: we pour all the garbage of the day in through the television. I have a television, but we need to be really on our guard with television, and with films, and with pop culture, and with criticism as Christians, with ungraciousness among brothers and sisters. We need to be careful what we're feeding our minds on! Is it any wonder in the day and age in which we live that we are reaping a harvest of depression when we consider what we're feeding our minds on? Especially if we're feeding our minds on anxiousness. Someone has said: 'Fear is the darkroom where many negatives are developed'.

Here's the last thing on the instruction label of this medicine bottle: worry about nothing, pray about everything, be thankful for anything, think about good things, and do the right thing. Verse 9: 'The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you'. You see, you've got to think right thoughts to do right deeds. It's like the horse and cart - you understand the sequence here: our thoughts determine our feelings, and our feelings determine our

actions. So we've got to regulate our thoughts, which will regulate our feelings, and then determine our behaviour. Almost everything in life depends on the thoughts: 'As the man thinketh in his heart, so is he'.

Do you need to regulate your thoughts? Do you need to reform your behaviour? For the things that you are doing are adding to your fear and your anxiety. Listen: 'Whoso offers praise glorifies Me, and to him who orders his conversation' - that means his life - 'aright will I show the salvation' - which means deliverance - 'of God'. Do you need to put something right? Here's the outcome of it all, verse 7: 'The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus'. You see that word 'guard' there? It's the Greek word for 'garrison', the peace of God will garrison a mount guard, like a sentry, standing there. Do you know what this is saying? If you do this, if you believe God and renounce the lies of the devil, if you determine upon the truth of God in agreement with Him, in contract covenant with Him, not to worry but to pray about everything, and be thankful for anything, and to think good thoughts, holy thoughts, and do right deeds - listen: God's peace will patrol and guard the gates of your mind and your heart, God's peace will shut out unhappy, unholy thoughts, and will create an environment of safety, of righteousness and blessing.

In this life, we can't avoid stressful situations, sure we can't? But we can avoid the condition of being stressed out. The Hebrew word for 'peace' is 'shalom'. Some of you have been in Israel, that's the greeting: 'Shalom', peace - but it doesn't just mean the absence of distress, it has a much broader, round remaining. This is what 'Shalom' means: 'the presence of wholeness, well-being, soundness, harmony and rest' - and that, listen to me, is the blood-right of the child of God who has believed in Jesus. It is promised!

Well, do you have it? The peace of God that is beyond understanding, that means everything in your life should be saying you're an absolute car wreck, but you have got a supernatural peace. Let us pray. This is life as God intends for you, child of God. Are there people here tonight, while the Holy Spirit is with us and ministering and speaking, who need to deal with the problem of fear and anxiety that's robbing you of your walk with God? I think, just like last night, we ought to pray, and we ought to pray all together just to help those pray audibly with us who are dealing with this issue. So will you pray with me, and repeat after me these words, and mean them and engage with God tonight if this is your problem, and say: 'Father, I come to You in the name of Your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, who died for me and shed His blood to cleanse me from all sin, to deliver me from this world, and the power of the enemy. I confess to You my fear and my anxiety, and that I have believed a lie' - now, you tell the Lord the lie, the specific lie that He has revealed to you tonight that you have believed, tell Him, take it on your lips, whisper it, take it on your lips. Then say: 'I choose to believe the truth of Your word, and to agree with You. I choose not to worry, I choose to turn my cares into prayers. I choose to be praiseful and thankful. I choose to have good thoughts and reject bad thoughts. I choose to do that which is right, and I claim by faith now, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the peace of God that passes understanding that was bought for me by the precious blood. I rebuke the enemy, and any spirit of fear, and I tell him he has nothing in me for I belong to Jesus. I resist him in Jesus, and stand fast in the faith. Amen'.

Now can I tell you that I suffered from anxiety and fear right throughout my

adolescent years, to the point of despair almost - but God delivered me, and He did. I'm not saying the devil doesn't come and whisper in my ear - sometimes he near hammers the head off me, but there is victory in Jesus.

Transcribed by Andrew Watkins, Preach The Word - November 2011
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Life As God Intends For His People - Chapter 7

"Life Of Love"

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We've been looking this week at 'Life As God Intends For His People'. We started last Sunday evening looking at 'Life Eternal'. Monday night was 'Life Empowered By The Spirit'. Tuesday night was a 'Life Of Grace Not Law'. Wednesday night, a 'Life Of Hearing God'. Thursday night and Friday night were double barrel, a 'Life Free From The Enemy' - on Thursday night we looked at a life free from oppression, demonic oppression, and unforgiveness; and on Friday night we looked at a life free from fear and anxiety. Tonight we're looking at a 'Life Of Love', and for that we're turning to John's Gospel and chapter 13, John chapter 13.

While you're turning to that, let me just say that some of our prayer letters, I think, are still left at the table at the back. I'll probably take most of them away, I can use them again, but if you didn't get one during the week or last Sunday please do avail yourself of those. John chapter 13 and just two verses for the moment anyway, verses 34 and 35 - and of course these are the words of our Lord. Jesus said: *"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another"*.

Let us pray together, and I've asked you each night to come with me and pray to God - sometimes we let the fellow at the front do all the praying - I want you to join me in praying that God will speak very definitely tonight to our hearts, irrespective of what He has been doing. We give Him praise and thanks, but we want to meet Him tonight. I believe that this is a very important message, I believe it's a very strategic message for the church of Jesus Christ in the day and age in which we live in our land. So I want us to open our hearts to the Lord. Maybe you're not even a Christian, well, the message won't be primarily to you, but there will be enough in it for you to get the message that you need Christ, and you need to experience His love. So why not even open your heart night, and say: 'Lord, I want You to speak to me, and I want to experience an encounter with You'. That's what it's all about - we've seen this week that the Christian experience is a relationship with God. What good is it to come to church - and I sincerely mean this - what good is it to come to meetings, and not meet God? So let's meet Him, and seek Him now as we come in prayer.

Father, we thank You for Your holy word. We thank You, Lord - and we've even heard it another context today - greater love has no man than this, but that a man lays down his life for his friends. We have remembered many who have laid down their lives today, and we thank You for that, for the sacrifice of love. We thank You most of all for the greatest love of all, the love of God in the Lord Jesus Christ when He demonstrated His love toward us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. We thank You for the love of God that is shed abroad in our hearts by the instrumentality of the Holy Spirit through faith in Jesus. We thank You, Lord, for that love that can outflow from us, as we seek to share Christ with others. Lord, we pray tonight that You will open heaven, as it were, and that You will pour out Your divine love - Joy of heaven to earth

come down. Lord, we pray that You will come and make Your abode with us with divine love. Lord, we pray - and this is a prayer just coming now from the depths of my heart to You, Father - that You would even do something tonight that will spark a flame for revival in our land. Our land needs a great many things, Lord, but one thing is definite: it needs love. We pray, Lord, that we, as the church, might be Your instrument to show the love of God to men and women around us. Even if there is one here who has never experienced that love through salvation, that tonight they would be born-again. Lord, we commit ourselves to You, we give You all the glory for what has gone before, and we give You glory in anticipation of what You're going to do tonight and in all of our lives, as we trust You and look to You and the power of the Holy Spirit. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Jesus said: 'By this all will know that you are My disciples, that you love one another'. By stating that, the Lord Jesus was saying that the distinguishing mark of being a Christian is that you love your fellow brothers and sisters in Christ - that is the distinguishing mark of true believers in the Lord: we love one another. Do you remember the lawyer who came to the Lord Jesus and asked Him: 'What is the greatest commandment?'. His reply pleased the lawyer, for Jesus said: 'The greatest commandment is this: that you love the Lord your God with all your soul, with all your heart, with all your mind, with all your strength; and the second greatest commandment is like that, that you love your neighbour as yourself'. In these two commandments is a summary, Jesus said, of all the law and the prophets. Basically what the Lord Jesus was establishing there was: love is the highest of all spiritual virtues.

Now, I hope you understand this. He said it was the sum total of the law of God, the first five books of the Bible - Genesis to Deuteronomy - and the prophets, the Old Testament prophets. But if I could put that into modern speak for us tonight, so that we can really understand the import of what Jesus is saying; effectively the Lord was announcing that this is what the Bible is all about - that's what He's saying! Love is what the Bible is all about. So, if you haven't got love, you haven't got the point. Indeed, you have missed the whole plot of Holy Scripture. Love is the mark of the fellowship of true believers, and all other criteria are strictly secondary to the fellowship of love that we ought to share with one another if we are in Christ.

Now, I told you last Sunday night that this John in John's Gospel is the same John who wrote the 1st, 2nd and 3rd epistle of John, and the book of Revelation. John elaborates in the first epistle of John about this brotherly love that we ought to have. He said: 'One who loves his brother abides in the light'. I told you last Sunday night that this little epistle, 1 John, is all about fellowship with God and communion with God. We established last Sunday night that this is what eternal life is all about, the Christian experience, John 17:3: 'To know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent'. So we can see a mark of a man or a woman who is in touch with God in that they love their brother and sister. He goes on to say: 'If you love your brother, God abides in you' - it's a mark of someone who is filled with the fullness of God. But then he goes on to talk about the opposite: 'One who doesn't love his brother cannot love God, and he is certainly not abiding in that fellowship of the perfect love of the Godhead - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit'.

A man by the name of Gayle D. Erwin wrote a book called 'The Jesus Style'. I was reading it not that long ago, and this was a striking statement in it that is very

applicable to our subject tonight - he said this: 'I was shocked to find that such a statement was missing from the great doctrinal statements of denominations'. The statement he's referring to is: 'Love one another, by this shall all men know that you are My disciples'. He was shocked that this great doctrinal statement was not found in the creeds, if you like, and doctrinal statements of denominations. 'It's missing', he goes on, 'from the great systematic theologies, missing from the creedal statements and, most unfortunate, missing from our daily lives'. Just as Paul said in 1 Corinthians 13, we are nothing without love. Calvin said: 'Whatever is devoid of love is of no account in the sight of God'. Do you understand this tonight? Furthermore, what the Lord is saying in these verses is that love is what the world must see to identify us as belonging to Christ.

Francis Schaeffer said: 'Only with this mark', love, 'may the world know that Christians are, indeed, Christians'. He goes on to say a very insightful thing: 'By love alone, that's the only way they will know that Jesus was sent by the Father'. Did you know that? It is our love amongst each other that shows that Jesus came in the flesh. You might say: 'I've never heard that before!'. Well, turn with me to 1 John chapter 4 please, for a moment, till I show you this. Remember the context of this book, fellowship and brotherly love and communion with God. First John chapter 4 and verse 12, John says: 'No one has seen God at any time' - now that's a given, we accept that - 'If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us'. Now I would vouch to say that most of you have read that verse before, but you've never really got the point. Read it again: what is the connection between the beginning of this verse, 'No one has seen God at any time', and the latter part of this verse, 'If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us'? Have you missed it? What John is saying is: people can't see God because God is invisible. They saw Him when He came manifest in human flesh, but the Lord Jesus has now, having risen, ascended to heaven. The Holy Spirit has come, but you cannot see the Holy Spirit, for He is spirit, as God is spirit - but the way they will see the invisible God, John says, is when we love one another.

I wonder how much of God people are seeing in us? It was evident of the first Christians that they loved one another. Describing first century Christians to the Roman Emperor Hadrian, Aristides said, I'm quoting him: 'They love one another. They never fail to help widows, they save orphans from those who will hurt them. If they have something, they give freely to the man who has nothing. If they see a stranger, they take him home and are happy as though he were a real brother. They don't consider themselves brothers and sisters in the usual sense, but brothers instead through the Spirit in God'. Tertullian, the church father, writes of the early Christians that people said of them: 'How those Christians love one another!'. It was working back there in the first century, but is it working now? The question begs: what does the world see in us today, and what do the world say about us in the church today? Now, I'm not being funny now, but I imagine most of them say: 'How those Christians hate one another!'. Is that too strong? Well, maybe as a generalisation it is, but as a characterisation it is true because there is so much fighting, bickering, bigotry, sectarianism, and party spirit within the body of Christ.

Do you remember in 1 Corinthians, Paul had this problem. He said: 'There are factions among you, schisms'. Some said 'I am of Paul', he was the forensic mind, the intelligent boffin, and the people that had a few brain cells knocking together, well, they thought, 'We'll follow Paul'. Some said 'I am of Apollos', he was a great orator, he

could communicate to the masses, and folk who liked that, they followed him. Others said 'I am of Cephas', which was Peter of course, and he was a man of the people, he was the real personality and folk were naturally warmed to him - so he had the common people following him. Then there was the spiritual crowd, and they said, 'Oh, we don't follow men, we're of Christ'. You might have thought they were the right crowd - they were not the right crowd, do you know why? Because they used their adherence to Christ as a basis to separate from their brothers and sisters, and you're not allowed to do that! You can't use the Lord Jesus Christ to separate from those who He has put you with in the body. Paul says: 'This ought not to be so, we are all one in Christ!'.

You can go back further than that and appeal to the Lord Jesus. You remember in Mark chapter 9 and verse 38, John - incidentally this same man John, who wrote this gospel and these epistles - he came to the Lord and he said: 'Teacher, we saw someone who does not follow us casting out demons in Your name, and we forbade him because he does not follow us'. The Lord Jesus said to him: 'He who is not against us is on our side'. Now friends, I know that this would be very unpopular preaching in many circles - and don't misunderstand what I'm saying, I'm not talking about some kind of false ecumenism, I'm not calling for uniformity - for unity is not uniformity. We will disagree, you will disagree with me and I will disagree with you, I can be absolutely sure - because half the time I disagree with myself and I don't even realise it! But the fact of the matter is: it's not that we disagree, it's how we disagree. Did you hear that? How we disagree speaks volumes of our understanding of this love of God, the grace of God we were talking about on Tuesday night. You remember we said: if we operate with God on a performance-based level of trying to earn tick with God and get His favour by our efforts, we will relate to other people on that basis - they will have to measure up to our standards before we will accept them. That's not what we're called to do. We're accepted by God through grace, and we are to accept our brothers and sisters in Christ by grace - full stop - and love them.

Augustine put it well when he said: 'In essentials there is to be unity, in nonessentials liberty, and in all things charity'. The Lord Jesus said in His prayer in John 17, He prayed for His people, listen: 'That they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us', and here's the purpose, 'that the world may believe that You sent Me'. Didn't we say that from 1 John 4? This is how the world will see God, and see the power and love of Christ: by the unity of the love between believers. Now I've heard people, and they're coming against ecumenism, and they're trying to say: 'Well, that verse really is speaking about the invisible church, and the Lord was praying that the church would be one'. Well, is that not absolute foolishness: to be praying for something that is already the case? For the church, the body, is one - but more than that, the text rebuts that, because if you look at this, He says: 'The purpose for which there is to be unity in the church is that the world may believe that You sent Me'. Do you think the world can see the church invisible? Of course they can't!

What am I canvassing for here tonight? Well, I'll tell you what I'm canvassing for: unity in the body of Christ. Now I am not a denominational animal, I never have been and probably never will be - but I am not foolish enough not to recognise that they exist, and I don't think they're going to go away tomorrow. But here's the thing, and I want to ask you a very pertinent question: when God looks down on Ballymoney tonight, do you think He sees one church or a few dozen? Now, I am being blunt, but

I'm being direct and serious, because we need to be, because our land is in dire straits. Do you think God is into denominations? Do you really? We need to get real with God, and get real with His word, and we also need to realise that when God came in mighty power - as far as I can see, in historic situations (I have to say that recently I've been looking into revivals that have been going on in our world within the last 10 to 20 years. You mightn't realise there have been, you'd think here in Ulster that the 1859 one was the last one, and God has gone to sleep since then. God has been moving ever since then! He has been moving in this last decade in places you would not imagine). But do you know what one of the major common denominators of those moves of God is? The church put aside their differences - they still had the differences, some had different views on the second coming, some had different views on baptism, some had different views on the gifts of the Spirit, but they realised that their community was on its way to hell, and they realised that with all their differences they knew Christ as Saviour and Lord, and they had the answer. They got together and, as the Psalmist says in 133, when brethren dwell together in unity, there God commands the blessing.

Now, we have got to rediscover this. If this is going against your grain, can I tell you very gently: you've got the problem! You've got it. You sort it out before God, it's your problem! I'm not saying, don't believe what you believe, and say that you believe everything else that somebody else believes - I'm not going to do that! But we've got to understand the detrimental consequences of our fighting and our disagreement, and how we disagree. A renowned Bible teacher said: 'If there's anything that would keep me away from Christ if I was lost, it would be the attitude of Christians toward one another', and I say 'Amen' to that. I despair at times.

Before Andrew Jackson became President of the United States, he was a general in the Tennessee Militia - some of you may have been reading about this even today in your daily readings. During the War of 1812, his troops started fighting and bickering among themselves. He called them together, and this is what he said: 'Gentlemen, let's remember that the enemy is over there'. We are not enemies with one another, and the enemy that we wrestle with is not flesh and blood. We wrestle with principalities and powers, we're meant to be wrestling in the spiritual - and so many of us are in the flesh and carnal.

Another problem is: because we as Christians are so opposed to so much immorality in the world, and so much false doctrine in the church - and there's bucketloads of it - we can come across as angry. Now listen, don't misunderstand what I'm saying: we ought to be angry with the injustices of our world, but the Bible says 'Be angry and sin not'. We ought to value sound doctrine, but the Bible says we are to speak the truth in love. We are not to be known by our anger, we're not to be defined by our anger. Jesus said: 'By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, by your love'. Someone said: 'God is light. God is love. That which professes to be light, yet lacks love, is not of God'. Richard Sibbes, the puritan, said: 'We are as we love, not as we know' - that's the measure of the man, the woman in Christ, their love! We've got to realise the real hindrance to blessing this is - there, perhaps, isn't a bigger one.

I'm sure you've heard of Mahatma Gandhi, he was a Hindu. Though he was a Hindu, he admired the Lord Jesus. He often read the Bible and quoted from the Sermon on the Mount. Once there was a missionary, some of you may have heard of him, by the name of E. Stanley Jones, and he met with Gandhi on one occasion. He asked him: 'Mr

Gandhi, though you quote the words of Christ often, why is it that you appear to so adamantly reject becoming His follower?'. Gandhi replied: 'Oh, I don't reject your Christ, I love your Christ, it's just that so many of you Christians are so unlike your Christ'. Oh, please let that sink in tonight: so many of you Christians are so unlike your Christ! Jesus said: 'You are the salt of the earth' - and that means many things, salt is a conservative, a preservative, but do you know what else salt does? It makes you thirsty - and we're meant to make people thirsty for Jesus. How? Jesus said: 'Your love for one another, by this shall all men know that you are My disciples'.

So the first thing I want to leave with you tonight is: love for the brothers and sisters, manifest in serving each other, is an evidence and a witness to those around us. Love for the brothers and sisters, manifest in serving. Look at verse 34 of chapter 13: 'A new commandment', Jesus says, 'I give to you'. Now, how is this a new commandment? Well, the ancient Greek here for 'new' doesn't mean this commandment was just invented. What it means is: this is a commandment being presented in a new, fresh way, like never before. Here's the punchline to it: 'Here's the new commandment that I give to you, that you love one another' - here's the emphasis - 'as I have loved you' - that you also love one another as I have loved you. You see, this wasn't new in a sense, because the Old Testament had commanded you to love your neighbour as yourself - but this was a new law in the extent of that love that we're meant to express toward one another. What Jesus is teaching is: you're to love your neighbour better than yourself, in fact you're even to go to the extent of dying for them if it is required!

So the command to love wasn't new, but the extent of love was new. It was being displayed here by the Son of God Himself: 'I want you to love one another just as I have loved you'. Of course, chapter 13 of John is in the last week of the life of our Lord, some call it 'Passion Week', it's the countdown to Calvary. He's going to die on the cross to display His love for us, and just before He does that He gives these disciples an object lesson at the beginning of chapter 13, look at it. Verses 1 to 5: 'Before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come that He should depart from this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end. And supper being ended, the devil having already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray Him, Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God and was going to God, rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself. After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded'.

His earthly ministry was almost over. In 24 hours He would be hanging on a cross. Though the cross is not mentioned in this incident, it casts a shadow over every word. Look at it, look at verse 4: Jesus 'rose from supper', He's rising from a place of rest, a place of comfort, just like He rose from the right hand of the Majesty on high in heaven, from the throne of God, a place of rest, a place of comfort. Look at what it says in verse 4: He 'laid aside His garments'. He took off His covering, just as He laid aside the glory that covered Him before He came as a little babe in flesh in Bethlehem's manger. He took off His heavily covering - He remained God, but it was clouded and shrouded in human flesh. Look at the verse: He 'took a towel and girded Himself' ready to do this work - just as He took the form of a servant, and came ready to work on this earth. Look at what verse 5 says: 'He poured water into a basin', ready to clean the disciples' feet - just as, at Calvary, having adorned a human body, He

poured out His blood to cleanse us from the guilt and penalty of sin. Then we read later on in verse 12: 'He sat down again' after washing their feet - and after shedding His blood, He rose from the grave, He ascended to heaven and sat down at the right hand of God the Father, having cleansed us and made one sacrifice for sins forever. Do you see what He was doing? He was pointing them to Calvary.

In verse 1 we read: 'He loved them', at the end of verse 1, 'He loved them unto the end' - it means unto the uttermost, to infinite degrees He loved them. This object lesson of Him washing the disciples' feet was such an illustration of how He was going to the cross, and He was going to give Himself completely for His disciples. You see, let's face it, He could have taken a wet flannel and wiped the disciples' feet clean, but He didn't. He gave Himself completely to the task, unclothing Himself, girding Himself with a towel, pouring out water into a basin, washing their feet, and sitting down. We see what this means redemptively, and I hope everyone here understands what Jesus Christ did for you because He loves you. Is there someone here and you're not converted, you're not born-again, you're not a Christian, a true Christian? You've never experienced repentance of sin and believed in a Saviour who loved you enough to come all the way from heaven and bleed and die on a cross, bearing your sin and shame, because He loves you and He wants to save you, and He gave Himself completely to the task that you might be born-again - and you're here and you're not redeemed, you're not ready to meet God.

We understand that redemptively, but the Lord Jesus really meant this practically. If you look at verse 15, He says: 'For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you', look at verse 17, 'If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them'. Now let's picture this in our minds: the Lord Jesus has got the disciples to reserve an upper room to eat the Passover, at which He will institute the Lord's Supper. So it's an upstairs room, so they have to go up the stairs, and it was the custom that there would have been a basin there at the bottom or the top of the stairs, and the disciples - who all, in those days of course, wore sandals walking around the dusty hills of Judaea - would have had very, very dirty, dry feet. It would have been a menial task for the lowest servant of the house to take that basin and wash the feet of all the guests - but I want you to see: one by one the twelve disciples walk past the basin. That means they ate with dirty feet, because it says the Lord rose from supper to wash their feet. They didn't sit in armchairs at tables like we do, dining sets - you may have seen it in pictures, they had low U-shaped tables, and they reclined at them on their elbow. So that means, as they were lying down, their dirty feet would have been very near the next person eating beside them - that's why it was imperative that they washed their feet.

Here they are all with dirty feet, and you ask the question: 'Why did none of the disciples wash their feet? Why did none of them do this first? Why was the Lord Jesus left to do it?'. Well, very simply, I believe any of them would have washed the Saviour's feet - but if they had washed His feet, they would have had to wash everybody else's, and so nobody got their feet washed. In fact, in Luke 22, we know in the sequence of events chronologically that it wasn't long after this event that they were arguing with themselves, only minutes later, who was the greatest among them! You see, there's a great principle here, it's found in verses 6 to 8. The Lord came to Simon Peter: 'And Peter said to Him, 'Lord, are You washing my feet?'. Jesus answered and said to him, 'What I am doing you do not understand now, but you will know after this'. Peter said to Him, 'You shall never' - and that's an emphatic negative, never,

ever - "wash my feet!". Jesus answered him, 'If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me'. Now listen carefully to this principle: it is only those who are humble enough to be served, to be served by Christ, by His grace - not try and achieve, but be served by grace - and also it is only the one humble enough to be served by their brothers and sisters, that are qualified to serve their Master.

Some of us are too proud to be served. You know the way we get on. You know, if you're invited for supper, you go and you have a good feed - but you have to invite them back, don't you? Your Pavlova has to be bigger than their Pavlova, and all the rest! You know what it's like: you can't often take a gift free gratis - gratuitously let the body minister to you. We've got a problem with this, Scots-Irish people in particular, self-sufficient, independent - and we need to learn what it is to be ministered to by the body, because it's only those who know how to be ministered to by Jesus and His body, which is the church, who are qualified to minister for Him and to give on His behalf. We haven't got time to look at it, but we've got to allow ourselves to be bathed, washed in the grace of God. Jesus said to Peter: 'I've got to wash you, bath you from head to toe to make you clean, or you can have nothing in Me'. Are you washed tonight, and cleansed completely?

Not only that, Jesus then went on to talk about how we need our feet washed continually. Though we are bathed once and for all at salvation, regeneration; to have communion with God, to receive from Christ and give on His behalf, we have to have our feet washed - because, as we walk through this world, we get dirty, we pick up germs and sin, and we need to be cleansed. We need to have the bathing, we need to have the basin - that's the communing with the Lord, but do you know what the problem is? I include myself here: sometimes we are too big for God to use. We know too much, we've too much experience.

These disciples got the message eventually - I have to say, I believe it was really after Pentecost that the penny dropped. We read in Peter's first epistle, chapter 5 verse 5, listen: 'All of you be submissive to one another', listen to this statement, 'and be clothed with humility'. Most believe, including myself, that he is alluding there to the Lord Jesus Christ girding Himself with the towel to wash the disciples' feet. Gird yourself with humility, 'for 'God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble''. This is the most staggering aspect of this event in John 13 to me: Jesus washed Judas' feet. Does that not bowl you over? Washing the feet of a traitor! I wonder is there a person here tonight, and someone has hurt you, someone has been treacherous toward you? Maybe there is a bitterness in your heart - the Lord, knowing that the devil had already entered into Judas Iscariot, imagine this! The Romans, in their culture, had no use for humility. The Greeks despised manual labour, but here the Lord Jesus exalts the virtues of service to the highest place. What He's saying is: the highest rank in the kingdom of God, in the power structure of His kingdom, is to be a servant - the highest rank!

Warren Weirsbe said: 'The world asks how many people work for you, but the Lord Jesus asks: for how many people do you work?'. You see, true love rolls up its sleeves, and more than that: it's where true blessedness is found. Look at verse 17, Jesus said: 'If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them'. Some might translate 'blessed', 'happy' - it's not the complete idea of the word, but it's part of it. Everybody wants happiness, don't they? But we often strive after happiness through selfishness, but what the Lord is saying here is: true happiness comes from humble service. You

cannot be happy, I believe, unless you are holy - but you cannot be holy unless you are humble. So the order in God's economy is: humbleness, then holiness, then happiness.

Now we haven't got time tonight to look at this doctrine of love - I mean, it's just throughout the whole book. We're meant to love our family: 'Fathers, love their children, do not provoke them to wrath', 'Husbands love their wives, as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it', 'Wives obey, in love, your husbands, in the Lord'. 'Any man that does not provide for his home', 1 Timothy 5 verse 8, and that's not just financially, you need to provide love. You could give your body to be burned, be running around the province serving the Lord - this is what I have to watch - and forget your own wee family that God has given you. 'If you don't provide for your own, you're no different than an infidel'. You're to love your neighbour, you're to love your brother - and this is a whole subject on it's own: you're to love your enemy. Corrie Ten Boom, I've mentioned her several times, was in a concentration camp, a Nazi concentration camp, and she said this about loving your enemy: 'You never so touch the ocean of God's love as when you forgive and love your enemies'.

The church in Ulster has a lot to learn here. Love for brothers and sisters is to be manifest in how we serve one another, and let others serve us. But here's something else: love for the lost is to be manifest in soul winning. Turn with me to Romans 9 verses 2 and 3 - we're almost finished - Romans 9 verses 2 and 3, here's the burden of the great apostle, showing his love for the lost that was manifest in his soul winning. He said in verse 2: 'That I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh'. I think it was Martin Luther who said: 'This is hard to understand, that a man could wish to be damned, that the damned might be saved' - that's basically what he's saying here. It was as if the heart of Christ dwelt in Paul, the heart of this love. Having this heart of Christ, he had this compassion toward lost people that transforms all human relationships. Do you have a passion for the lost, or is it a lost passion?

It places love on a supernatural plain, that's exactly where it is - because this love that we're talking about is not something you crank up within yourself to try and love people you don't even like, or you disagree with in any shape or form, morally, politically, religiously. No! This is a supernatural love, this is the agape love of God - this is a fruit of the Spirit that enables us to love the unlovely, to love the unthankful and the indifferent, and we need it if we're going to conquer Ireland for Christ! It is the missing ingredient that they are not seeing, because they don't even see the love that we ought to have for one another when we're at one another's throats! Remember what Paul said in Galatians: 'You bite and devour one another'. We need a renewed love for the lost.

John Henry Jowett said: 'We can never heal the needs we do not feel. Tearless hearts can never be heralds of the passion. We must pity if we would redeem, we must bleed if we would be ministers of the saving blood. The disciple's prayer must be stricken with much crying and many tears. The ministers of Calvary must supplicate in bloody sweat, and their intercession must often touch the point of agony. True intercession', he says, 'is a sacrifice, a bleeding sacrifice'. All that is is the heart of Christ in the believer! We've been talking about relationship with Christ, that's what the Christian life is - and, just like in marriage relationship, when you become intimate with your

husband or your wife, we said on other nights: we can read the signs and signals how they communicate with us, but we can also feel their emotions at times. In a very unusual way we are heart-to-heart with them, we say, and that's exactly what happens when you become close to Jesus, when you become intimate with Him - you feel His broken heart for lost souls! Sometimes you wives and husbands can second guess one another. There is a hymn I learned many years ago when I was involved in a national Young Life campaign, and the chorus of it goes like this:

'Let me look at the crowd as my Saviour did,
Till my eyes with tears grow dim,
Let me look and pity the wandering sheep,
And love them for love of Him'.

It's seeing the lost with Jesus' eyes, it's loving the lost with Jesus' heart, it's touching the lost with Jesus' hands. Let me sum up this love as we close this meeting and close this series - we're really summing up the life that God intended. I want you to turn, as we come to a close, to 1 Corinthians chapter 13, and we're going to read this great purple passage on love. Verse 4 through to the beginning of verse 8: 'Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails'.

I want you to do something. Look at verse 4 again, and I want you now to replace the word 'love' with the word 'Jesus', look at it: 'Jesus suffers long. Jesus is kind; Jesus does not envy; Jesus does not parade Himself, is not puffed up; Jesus does not behave rudely, Jesus does not seek His own, is not provoked, Jesus thinks no evil; Jesus does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; Jesus bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Jesus never fails'. This love is the life of Jesus! Now, do something else for me, come back to verse 4: 'David Legge suffers long and is kind' - I have to stop there, for I can't go on. Even what I have said is not always true - but, you see, what the Lord wants me to do is die with Him. I have died with Him, the Bible says, and I have to reckon it such, and I have to allow Him to live through me - that is what the Spirit wants to make you. Listen to me tonight: this is the life that God intends for His people, it's the very life of Jesus lived through the Spirit in me. He wants to reproduce the characteristics and the attributes of the Son of God in you and me! The love of Christ, the character of Jesus!

'If of Jesus Christ their only view may be
What they see of Him in you,
My soul, what do they see?'

What do they see? Robert C Chapman, one of the early pioneer brethren missionaries, said that his great aim was, I'm quoting him: 'Seeing so many preach Christ, and so few live Christ, I will aim to live Christ'. Later J.N. Darby of the brethren said of R.C. Chapman: 'He lives what I teach'. I'm sure most of you know of Robert Murray M'Cheyne, that great Scots minister, and it was said of him by an onlooker, a friend: 'Oh, he is the most Jesus-like man I ever knew'. What an epitaph! There was once a professor who wrote a very learned thesis on the subject of love - the only defect was, the professor had never been in love. When he took the manuscript to the typist to prepare for the publisher, the typist turned out to be a very lovely young lady. When

their eyes met, something happened to the professor which was not in his book - he was happier in five minutes with love in his heart, than he had been 30 years with it in his head. Something like that needs to happen to the church in Ulster: we need to get the love out of our heads and into our hearts, and onto our hands.

It's the fruit of the Spirit, I believe it's the fruit that bears all the other fruits from it. It's commanded here - not only that, but the Lord says He empowers us to obey this command. The love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Ghost who is given to us. 'By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you love one another' - if you love your brothers and sisters through serving, and you love the lost through soul winning. Can I ask you tonight: how is our love? Thomas Fuller once said, listen to this, this is profound, I really want you to get this - and I'm closing now, listen: 'If God should have no more mercy on us than we have charity one to another, what would become of us?'. Let me repeat that: 'If God should have no more mercy on us than we have charity one to another, what would become of us?'. In other words, if we were left to look after one another in love without the help of God, what would happen?

Let us pray. Now we're going to sing in a minute and close the meeting in prayer. I'm conscious now that this has been a strong word, it's not my desire to come across in a condemning way - but, you know, these things are so serious. Our land needs revival, desperately needs revival, Ireland needs revival - Ireland needs revival, not just Ulster, it's Ireland. The British Isles needs revival, and they need to see Christ in us. They need to see the love of Jesus for them in us. Now there are people here tonight need to repent. There are seven letters to seven churches at the beginning of Revelation, and five of the churches are told to repent. Do you need to repent tonight for a lack of love towards your brother or sister, despising them because of their church? God forgive us!

Father, I hardly know what to say. I know there's great opposition to this message that I have preached. I don't mean here, Lord, but in the spiritual realm, where the flesh is concerned - people kick out against this, because they have their little prejudices, their little idols, whether it's of doctrine or practice that may be true, but that they have put above the law of love, and that they have not surrendered to Your Lordship. Oh God, I pray, as Jesus prayed, that we may be one, even as Father and Son are one in the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit; and, Lord, that You would be pleased to see brethren dwell together in unity, and command the blessing - even life, this life - forevermore. Amen.

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