

Joy From Christ, Not Your Performance

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Father, I will preach a message today that I myself have trouble living. Lord, do not allow me to be in the hypocrisy of making people believe I am something I am not. For I know Lord that there are no such thing, there is no such thing as a great man of God only weak, pitiful, faithless man of a great and merciful God. Oh Lord, that you would provide the power through your Holy Spirit to change my life through this message, and to make me more conformed to the image of Christ through this message, Lord I would greatly appreciate it. Help us all, Lord, in Jesus name, amen.

May God help us all get our greatest joy from Christ, and not from our performance. I am so tired of just doing. So tired of having my Christian life reduced down to how I perform and what I do. Jesus Christ comes to me. His yoke is easy and His burden is light, and He tells me this: it is not what you do, for I can raise up rocks to do what you do and to do better than you do. But it is: Paul, the seal that I've set up upon you, the decree and the hope is that you would be conformed to My image. That you would be conformed. That is what He desires. And I submit to you today that all the problems, if not all, most of the problems in your life come from who you're not, from your character - who you are as a person. Our squabbles in our marriages come from fleshly outbursts. They come from not reflecting Jesus Christ. The problem between brothers, the problem in life, the problem... the disruption of our own conscience, everything comes down from: we are not putting enough emphasis where emphasis belongs and it is on becoming like Jesus.

Everybody wants to DO something, when we ought to be wanting to BE something! Now listen to me, this might set some of you free. Do you ever get up in the morning and you had your quiet time and feel the presence of God and you were studying the Word and you seem to, God seems to speak to you and then you go out and you witness to everybody and you are obedient, and, boy, you just did it right that day. I mean you just were on top of the world, you loved your wife, you didn't kick the cat, you are just walking with God and you are so full of joy at the end of the day. Then the next day you get up. Well, you overslept, you shouldn't have watched that program that night before, you should have been in the Word, you didn't witness when you had an opportunity, and there's a real sense in which you are filled with sorrow. You know what it is? Idolatry. You have become the source of your own joy. Your joy comes from you and your continuous work. My joy comes from the finished work of Jesus Christ. Now I want to be obedient, I want to witness, I want to love my wife, and there is a real sense that the Holy Spirit convicts me when I do not do those things.

But the point is, poverty of spirit is a wonderful thing because when you realize... It is like I used to tell young preachers, I'd say, in order to preach you have to have the power of God on your life. Now I them in order to tie your shoes, you have to have the power of God on your life. You cannot breathe! Sometimes I get invited to church growth conferences -- not very often -- but they will talk of all these great things that they are going to do, then I will get up and say, Let me ask you a question: From where does every breath come?" "From God." "From where does every beat of your heart, from where does it come?" "From God." Oh so you characters out

here, you pastors and preachers and evangelists and missionaries with all these great plans, now tell me something. YOU CAN'T EVEN BREATHE! Your heart will not even beat except for the power of God on your life! Apart from any measure of grace in my life, I would be here to you today nothing more than a seething demonstration of egotistical flesh. That's all I would ever be.

I was reading through Galatians this morning and I was so convicted. I was reading through Galatians and it talked about dissention and disputes, things like that. And I realize that sometimes I do that with my wife and it just showed me that it wasn't that well you know I have... we just have a problem or we don't agree. The fact of the matter is, I am in the flesh. I am in the flesh, and I am not relying upon the power of God and the reason why I am not is because I am not poor in spirit. Someone says, well, I am poor in spirit. How much do you pray? How much do you tremble? How much do you rely on the wisdom of God revealed in His Word? Poverty of spirit. But isn't that wonderful, church, listen to me. Isn't wonderful that you don't have to be something big. Actually what you have to be is something low, something broken and humble, take the back seat, wash the feet, be timid and afraid of any task put before you so that it drives you to your knees. Realize when you wake up in the morning that I shall not move to my left or to my right, one quarter of an inch because without the power of God upon my life, surely I will fall. That's what the passage means in the prayer, lead us not into temptation. It is a recognition of weakness, and a recognition of a tremendous need of grace, of grace. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. [Matthew 5:3] Oh, what a place, what a place!