

SERVANT LEADERSHIP

BY

Calvary Chapel Outreach Fellowship

Lesson 12 **Abiding in Christ**

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The Apostle Paul, in 2 Corinthians, begins to share a little bit about his ministry. Paul had a plague. It followed him wherever he went. There were those who were so opposed to the message of grace that Paul was proclaiming that they felt it was their God-given duty to follow Paul wherever he established churches. And as soon as Paul left, they moved in like vultures to try to discredit his ministry in the hearts of the people. They would say, “Who is Paul?” They do not really recognize him in Jerusalem. They would challenge his apostleship and his authority. So Paul found it necessary, many times, to write these epistles to encourage the people not to listen to these smooth-talking deceivers who would follow him.

It is interesting to me that those who have heresy to proclaim never proclaim it to the world; they proclaim it to the church. Heretical doctrines are rarely evangelistic. Those who spread them are always coming to the church to feed off of the church. They will not go out in the front lines against the devil, but they will come to your churches. They will try to get a little group, a little listening audience, and then they will whisper, “I don’t know if you are spiritually ready for this or not, but God has been revealing some marvelous things in these days.” And they start trying to feed off of the body.

Paul was plagued by these individuals who would follow him and then try to disrupt the saints of God. They would not go to the cities where Paul had not gone. They were not willing to start their works in new areas or uncharted territory. They would go to those who had already come to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ and try to subvert the gospel that Paul had preached unto them.

So Paul is writing to the Corinthians. These undermining people would come with their letters of authority that stated, “So and so recognizes me, et cetera.” Paul says, “Hey, I do not need any letters of commendation, for you are really my letters of commendation. You are the living epistles. The very fact that you believe in Jesus Christ is my letter of commendation. You owe your faith to me. The fact that you are walking in the Lord is my letter of commendation. I do not need to come along and prove myself” (cf. [2 Corinthians 3:1–3](#)).

Now Paul, in considering the ministry, says, “And who is sufficient for these things? (cf. [2 Corinthians 2:16](#)). And then he answers the question, “Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of Christ” (cf. [2 Corinthians 3:5](#)).

I look at the ministry and all that it entails—dealing with people, handling the Word of God, and being God’s representative. To me the heaviest part of the ministry is knowing that people are developing their concepts of God by what they see in me. They are drawing their ideas of what God is like, as they observe me. As a minister of Jesus Christ, I am a representative of Him and it is my duty to represent Him before people. And they are developing their concepts of God as they observe me. They are developing their concepts of God as they observe you. As has been pointed out, you are a role model for people. As you shepherd, they are going to be following you. They are going to follow the example that you have set.

I heard that Greg Laurie and one of his deacons decided to go hunting. They left in the pick-up with the guns in the rack in the back. They went to an area of Riverside County, but everything was posted “Closed. No hunting”. They had driven for hours and so finally the deacon said, “The only chance we are going to have to hunt is over there on Old Man Brown’s ranch but he is the meanest guy in the whole county. He has a reputation of being so mean that he will be out with his shotgun if you dare go anywhere near his yard.” Greg said, “We have come this far, I would like to do some shooting. I think I will just go up and ask him. Nothing ventured, nothing gained. It will not hurt to ask the fellow.”

Greg went up to the door and knocked. He said, “Sir, my deacon and I decided we would go hunting today. We have been driving for a long time and we found everything posted ‘closed’. I am Greg Laurie, the pastor of the Harvest Fellowship in Riverside. I was wondering, do you suppose it would be possible to do a little shooting on your property?” The fellow said, “So you are Greg Laurie? That is tremendous! I have been listening to your radio broadcast and man, do I ever appreciate your ministry. You do not know what you have done for my family and I.” He said, “We never miss your Bible study. Honey, do you know who is here? It is Greg Laurie!” He was just so excited. He said, “Hey, I would count it a real privilege for you to hunt on my property. But I do have one favor to ask you.” He said, “That horse out there in the corral... You see him out there? The vet just left and said that he is sick and we have to put him down. Would you mind shooting the horse before you go on out?” Greg said, “No, I will be glad to shoot the horse for you.”

So he headed back to the truck and Greg decided he would play a trick on his deacon. As he got back to the truck, he said to the deacon, “It is true. That guy has to be the meanest guy I have ever met in my life. You cannot believe what that man said to me. In fact, I am boiling. I am so mad.” He said, “I just have to do something. I cannot just drive off, I have to do something.” He grabbed the gun off the rack, leveled on the horse, and pulled the trigger. Pow! And the old horse falls over dead. And as Greg turned around to put the gun back, he hears, Pow! Pow! And the deacon says, “I got two of his cows. Let’s get out of here, Greg!”

So you are a role model. Your people are going to follow you. You have to be careful of the kind of an example you set for them as God’s representative.

When I think of these responsibilities, I cry out with Paul, “Who is sufficient for these things?” When I think of all that the ministry entails, the obligations, the responsibilities, and the accountability of the ministry that I must one day make before God, with Paul I often say, “Who is sufficient for these things?” And I recognize immediately that I am not. I am not sufficient for these things. I cannot handle it. It is more than what I can handle. It is important for us to recognize as Paul did, that we are not sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves (cf. [2 Corinthians 3:5](#)).

If God has started to bless your ministry, if God has started to use you in a special way, do not think that it is of yourself. Why is it that we always look for something in us as a reason why God finally chose us? He finally came around and realized what He had here. “Isn’t that wonderful? God finally knows just what a prize He snagged when He got hold of me. And now God is beginning to use me because God knew that He could trust me.” We begin to think that it is something of us when in reality, as Paul says, “God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise” (cf. [1 Corinthians 1:27](#)).

So God has chosen you and God has chosen me—the foolish things of the world, the simple things—that He might work through us in order that the wise might be confounded. Some may say, “Well, I do not understand how or why God does it for them.” The sufficiency is not of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of Christ.

There are a couple of Scriptures that I have really taken to heart which have become more or less models for my life. One is the statement of Jesus to His disciples in John 15, as He is talking about this relationship of the vine and the branches. Jesus said, “Apart from Me you can do nothing” (cf. [John 15:5](#)). I do not like to hear that. “Lord, surely there is something I can do.” I spent several years trying to disprove that Scripture. I felt that surely there has to be something I

can do that is worthwhile for God. But there came a day when I waved the white flag and I said, “I surrender, God. I agree. Apart from You, I can do nothing.”

I put that along with [Philippians 4:13](#), “For I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.” Apart from Him I can do nothing, but listen, there is nothing that I cannot do *with* His help. My sufficiency is not of myself; my sufficiency is of Christ. And when my sufficiency is of Christ, I have all sufficiency. I need nothing more than Him to accomplish my ministry, yet I have no ministry apart from Him.

I have no sufficiency of myself, my sufficiency is of Christ, who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament, not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life. (cf. [2 Corinthians 3:5–6](#))

This is a Scripture that has often been misinterpreted. I have heard people use this Scripture to prove that the Bible can kill people. “The letter killeth. If you just preach the Word of God, you are going to kill those people because the letter killeth.” I have heard it used to prove that you should not just teach the Word of God. Paul is talking about a new covenant and an old covenant. The new covenant is through Jesus Christ. The old covenant, the covenant of the letter of the law, killeth. You see, the law has actually condemned all of us to die. The law revealed to us God’s righteous standard. None of you have lived up to it. And having failed to live up to it, the law only has one thing for you—death. It has no power to justify you, no power to make you righteous, no power to forgive you. The law only has power to sentence you to death, and under the law you have been sentenced to death. The letter killeth. It has sentenced you to death, but the new covenant in Christ has brought us life.

Often our preaching would be corrected if we would just read the context. Paul goes on to talk about Moses and the law, the ministration of death. But even though it was a ministration of death, it was so glorious that when God gave the law it was necessary for Moses to veil his face when he met with the people. That which was fading was so glorious. That which was not to last, the law, which was only to be the schoolmaster to bring people to Christ, was so glorious that Moses’ face had to be veiled.

Paul goes on to say,

But we, with unveiled faces, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed from glory to glory even into the same image by the power of His Spirit working in us. (cf. [2 Corinthians 3:18](#))

Originally, man was created in the image of God. God said, “Let Us make man in Our image and after Our likeness” ([Genesis 1:26](#)). There is a Scripture in the New Testament that says we are of the genus of God, a remarkable Scripture indeed. In the beginning, man was God’s genus, His offspring, made in the image of God. Man fell from that image of God. Now the purpose of God is to restore man back into that image. That is the purpose of the coming of Jesus Christ. The purpose of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is to restore to man that which was lost by the fall. Even though man fell from the image of God because of sin and the fall, the purpose of God is to restore him into that image through Jesus Christ. “Now we with unveiled faces, beholding the glory of the Lord.”

Now here is where you come in. You see, it is your duty to so preach Christ to people so that they will see the glory of the Lord. Now if through your preaching people can see the glory of God and the glory of Jesus Christ, their lives will be changed.

So many times we are trying to change people by establishing rules for them. “The law could not do it but I will give you a set of rules. Follow these ten points. To really be righteous, you have to do this, this, this and this, and you cannot do this, this and this.” And then we are constantly riding them for their failures. What we need to do is preach Christ so that the people get a view of God and the glory of God. “As they, with open faces, behold the glory of the Lord, they will be changed from glory to glory into that same image” (cf. [2 Corinthians 3:18](#)).

Now that does not just go for other people; that goes for you too. Where do we, with unveiled faces, behold the glory of the Lord? It is right here in the Book. Too much of our Bible study is purely for the purpose of sermonizing. We do not read it for our own benefit, for our own devotional purposes. We think, “Man, I have to get a sermon. Where can I go?” And so I start reading with a sermon in mind rather than to discover Him, His glory, His beauty, and His wonder.

I have heard said—and it upsets me tremendously—“We are not interested in doctrine, we are interested in experience. We are not interested in studying the Word, we are interested in experiencing the Word.” I would like to say to you that I think that the greatest problem in the church today is the lack of good theology. People do not know the truth about God. Satan has been lying to people about God for a long time. There are more misconceptions concerning God, His nature, and His character than any person in the universe. What people need to know more than everything else is the truth about God, the nature of God, and the character of God. They need to know good sound theology, the doctrine of God, so that they, with open face, can behold the glory of the Lord and as they do, God’s Spirit will begin the changes in them.

It is a truth of life; it is a truth of the Scripture that man becomes like his god. David, in Psalm 115 said,

The gods of the heathen are vain, for they carve them out of
wood or silver. And eyes they have, but they cannot see. Feet
they have but they cannot walk. Ears they have but they cannot
hear. Mouths they have but they cannot speak. And they that
have made them have become like the gods that they have made.
(cf. [Psalm 115:3-8](#))

Why? It is because a man becomes like his god. That is just a truth of life.

We, with open faces beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed from glory to glory into the same image, because a man becomes like his god.

Beloved, now are we the sons of God. It doth not yet appear
what we are going to be. We know that when He appears we are
going to be like Him. ([1 John 3:2](#))

Why? It is because a man becomes like his god.

That is why it is so important that people have a true and proper concept of God. There are two places where they are going to develop their concepts of God. One is by the word that you preach.

And secondly, it is by the life that you live before them. And God help us, they need to be consistent with each other.

Paul said, “Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy we faint not” (cf. [2 Corinthians 4:1](#)). Man, if it were not for God’s mercy I would faint. I would check out. I would say, “Lord, You better get someone else. That is too much for me to try to handle. I do not want to try to handle that, Lord.”

But as we have received mercy, we faint not. But we have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness nor handling the Word of God deceitfully, but by the manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man’s conscious in the sight of God. ([2 Corinthians 4:1-2](#))

Now notice how we are not to handle the Word—in craftiness or deceitfully. You are aware of the fact that you can make the Scriptures say almost anything you want them to say. We see that all the time. Every cult tries to prove their point with the Scriptures. And so often we hear a person say, “But in the Greek it says...” There is a lot of deceitful handling of the Word of God. Honest exposition is hard to come by. Even some of the greatest Bible expositors today have those areas of scriptural prejudice where they become dishonest in their exposition of the Word. There are men whom I highly admire and respect as far as their teaching abilities, but when they get to certain areas where they have their blind spots, they are not honest in their exposition of the Word. They have certain things that they do not believe. They have certain things that they have relegated to the period of the apostolic age. They are certain that some things no longer exist and anything that happens that is close to what is in the Scripture, has to be of Satan. They are dishonestly and deceitfully handling the Word of God.

They have taken, “And that which is perfect has come” ([1 Corinthians 13:10](#)), and dishonestly and deceitfully tried to make that refer to the full revelation of the Scriptures. There is really no possible way you can come to that conclusion. That misinterpretation was not even used up until the present century when they tried to disprove the modern Pentecostal movement. Go back to *Thayer’s Lexicon*. Go back to the expositors before the modern out-pouring of the Holy Spirit and every single one of them, including Dean Alford, say that this has to refer in context to the coming again of Jesus Christ, “that which is perfect.” But because this understanding opposes their theology, they handle the Word of God deceitfully.

Now it is one thing to see what others are doing and point my finger at them, but I also have to look and say, “Do I have a blind spot? Am I approaching the Word of God with a presuppositional base that causes me to twist the Scriptures to support my theology the way I believe it to be?”

I was at a Bible conference one time and one of my favorite Bible teachers was ministering to the ministers in attendance. It was a pastors’ Bible conference. He got to that passage in Revelation 10:6 where it says, “And time shall be no more.”

And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven, And sware by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer. ([Revelation 10:5-6](#), KJV)

He was of a Pentecostal background and like some Pentecostal ministers, he had a way of taking a phrase and repeating it and repeating it, to get people stirred up each time he said it with a little more verve. It gets a little more exciting and everybody gets a little more excited about it. He shouted, “And time shall be no more! Bless God, you pastors. You have been having so much trouble. You are always buried by your schedules. You never have enough time to do these things. And bless God, you are not going to have any schedules. Time shall be no more!” And he kept building the thing up until everybody was just really excited. “Oh bless God! Throw away our watches. Time shall be no more!”

At that time, I had a very close friend that used to travel with me and we would often go out together after the services. He was an older man and he liked me. I was a young fellow and he sort of took me under his wing and tutored me along. And so when we were out after this particular meeting getting a piece of pie at the coffee shop, I said to him, “It is my understanding that in the Greek it really is declaring there shall be no more *delay*. In other words, the rest of the things are going to move on in quick fashion. And the kingdom is now going to be set up without any more delay.” He smiled rather sheepishly and said, “I knew you were the only one that would catch that.” I had some problems with that because that is handling the Word of God deceitfully in order to get the people excited. It is not a true exposition of the Word.

We have to be careful how we handle the Word of God. We have to be honest in our exposition. I believe that we need to be as honest as we possibly can. I believe that sincerity plays a part in it. If we are sincere, though we may not be interpreting a Scripture correctly, if it is my understanding that that is the way it is, I believe that God is gracious and merciful to me.

My position has changed over the years on many Scriptures. There are a lot of sermons that I wish I could retract. Over the years I have matured in my understanding of the Word. There are some Scriptures that I have come to a fuller understanding of and it has changed from my earlier understanding of those Scriptures.

In seminary I had a professor who said, “Do not attempt to preach from the parables until you have been pastoring for at least twenty-five years.” I thought, “Oh come on, I understand those parables. I am ready to preach on them now.” And I started preaching from the parables. I now wish I had some of those sermons back.

How many sermons have you heard on the Prodigal Son where the whole sermon is predicated upon the father waiting to receive the prodigal home? “The father is watching daily, waiting for him in the distance. And oh, how God is waiting and watching to receive you.” And the whole sermon is based upon God’s receiving and the forgiveness of the prodigal. That is not the purpose of that parable at all. Jesus was eating with the sinners and the publicans, and the Pharisees were finding fault with Him. They said, “Look at Him, He is eating with sinners and publicans.” Jesus spoke a parable against them saying,

There was a little widow woman who lost a coin. She swept and searched her house until she found her coin and she said to her friends, “Rejoice! I have found the coin that I lost.” (cf. [Luke 15:8-9](#))

Then Jesus said,

There was a shepherd who had ninety-nine sheep, but one was lost. And he left the ninety-nine and went out to find the one that was lost. When he found it he said, “Come! Rejoice with me for the lost has been found.” (cf. [Luke 15:4-6](#))

Jesus was now getting to the purpose of His parable. You see, He was showing first of all that the natural result of finding something that is lost is to rejoice. They were unnatural in their reaction saying, “Oh He is eating with publicans and sinners.” They should have been rejoicing that the lost were being found but they were finding fault. They were the elder brother and the parable was spoken against them.

I had some tremendous evangelistic sermons out of that parable. God used it and people were saved, but I could never preach it that way again.

The kingdom of heaven is like unto a man going through a field discovering a treasure and who, for the joy thereof, immediately goes out and sells everything he has so that he can buy that field and obtain the treasure. (cf. [Matthew 13:44](#))

Many times I have preached on that parable saying, “How glorious it is to discover Jesus Christ. I tell you, you have such glorious riches in Christ. Are you willing to give up everything in order to have these glorious riches in Jesus Christ?” I had some really neat little illustrations on this. I would modernize it. Jesus was talking about things that were modern in His day. They understood them. So I would say, “You are going through a field and you trip. You pick yourself up, look down, and find that you tripped over a piece of metal. You start kicking the thing and it is like a bigger piece of metal than you thought. You scrape it with a stick and it looks like a lid. So you get a shovel and dig. You open the chest and there are all kinds of jewels. What do you do? Do you cover the thing over? No, you put the bushes back in place, go down to the hall of records and you find out who owns that field. You say, ‘Hey, how much do you want to sell your field for?’ You get him to give you a price and then you go out, sell your Chevy and hock your watch. You sell everything you have in order to buy that field so you can obtain the treasure. And then, once you have obtained the treasure, do you go back and buy your old Chevy back again? No way, man. You go down to the Mercedes dealer and get a new Mercedes. You are a rich man now.” My point was that we give up things to receive Christ and now that we have the glorious riches we do not go back and pick up the old things again. Our lives are so rich and so full in Christ that we do not moan and say, “Oh, I sold my old Chevy to have all of this.” No, you say, “Man, that thing was a wreck anyhow. Some sucker got it. Now I am enjoying my Mercedes.” And so I would modernize the story.

Years later I discovered that the field is the world, and Jesus is the One who sold everything to purchase the field. The treasure was me. A couple more good sermons went right out the window. I used to be able to really prove a good point and encourage a lot of people, but if I would use that Scripture like that again, it would be deceitful because I now have a proper understanding.

So we are not to handle the Word of God deceitfully. We have to be honest in our exposition of the Scriptures. We have to deal with the Word of God honestly, not walking in craftiness. I do not believe in the use of psychology or psychological little ploys in order to get people to make a commitment to Jesus Christ. There are a lot of gimmicks that have been introduced. We have learned how to manipulate people. We know how to get them excited. We know how to get them stirred up. I do not believe in it. I think it is wrong to use psychological ploys and craftiness. You may get them forward but you have only a shallow commitment.

I remember one time when I was still in seminary and I was holding a meeting up in Ventura. I heard of this clever little ploy that this evangelist used. When he was ready to give his invitation he said, “How many of you want to go to heaven when you die? Stand to your feet.” Naturally, everybody stood. Then he said, “How many of you know for sure, at this moment, if you would die right now you would go to heaven? Sit down.” And a bunch of people sat down and a bunch of liars sat down. The only one who remained standing was actually my uncle. I was embarrassed because he was honest enough to remain standing. And I could see by the look on his face that he thought, “I’ve been had!” That is the last time he has been to church and that haunts me. Yes, some can be very crafty.

God does not need our craftiness. God does not need psychological ploys. We know that people like recognition. We know that people are carnal and walk in the flesh. So why not appeal to their carnality? “We really are needing funds now. How many will commit to give a hundred dollars this next month, over and above your tithes? Stand up.” We know that people want recognition. We know that it is a good way of raising funds. Of course nowadays they start with \$10,000. Then when they get down to the hundreds you feel like a piker. As people stand signifying their pledge, everyone cheers. “Bless God. Isn’t that wonderful? Look friends, there is Brother Jones over there. Look at that. Bless God, he always comes through. Isn’t he marvelous? Oh, give him a hand, folks. He gave a million dollars for the work of God’s kingdom. Bless God!” Brother Jones is over there and he has been had by a clever evangelist, taken in by craftiness.

Oh yes, you can do it that way but it is going to be shallow and there is not going to be any real reward for it. The saddest thing of all is that Brother Jones is not going to get any reward for it either; he has already had it all.

Take heed to yourselves that you do not do your righteous deeds
before men to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward
from your Father in Heaven. (cf. [Matthew 6:1](#)).

Where, Lord? In the praise, the acknowledgement, the recognition by man, you have had your reward. For in that day the secret hidden things will be revealed and our works are going to be judged by fire of what sort they are. That is, our works will be judged by what motivated us to do them. And many of the works that people have done that have been motivated by the flesh, or motivated by their desire to receive glory and recognition by man will be consumed in the fire, and there will be nothing for them from God. Many of my works will be wood, hay, and stubble, and they will be burned because I have already received my reward (cf. [1 Corinthians 3:12-15](#)).

I desire glory in my flesh even in spiritual things. For years I sought glory for my flesh in the physical things such as athletic achievements. Then when I got over the hill I started looking for glory in my flesh in spiritual things. Do you know what my flesh enjoys almost more than anything else? I enjoy people saying, “Oh you are so deeply spiritual. You are so deep in the things of the Lord. My, you walk so close to God.” My flesh just loves it because I like people to think that I am more spiritual than I really am. I like people to think that I pray more than I really do. I like people to think that I read the Bible and I know the Bible better than I actually do. I have dirty little deceitful ways of dropping clever little statements or hints here and there so that you will know how deeply spiritual I really am. I want you to know how much I really pray, so you will know how close I really walk with God because my rotten, lousy flesh wants glory.

Now I am going to say some things that could possibly hurt some of you. I would like to preface it by saying if it was really done from a sincere heart in the Spirit then please accept what I am

saying in that spirit and it will not bother you. You will still love me and you will accept it in the Spirit. But if you were doing it in the flesh, then you are going to get very upset with me. You are going to be hurt; you are going to be offended. But if you were doing it in the flesh, you *should* be offended and hurt.

Do you know that I am almost fearful in opening up a meeting to the real moving of the Spirit? It is because whenever God's Spirit begins to move across a group of people and people start to really worship the Lord and get in the spirit of worship and praise, the flesh gets caught up in it. Everybody is worshipping and praising. There is this high. There is a movement. And you know that someone in the flesh is going to try to take glory from God and bring attention to himself by either a loud outburst, a scream, or a cry. Now when that person makes that loud outburst, what happens to me? My mind has been on the Lord. I have been worshipping God. I have been drawn by the Spirit. I am beholding God and the glory of God. Someone lets out an outburst, and now what happens to me mentally? My mind is immediately taken over to the person who is screaming, over to the person who is shaking and falling on the floor and flopping. My focus is drawn to the person who is suddenly standing up with hands raised and eyes closed, though the rest of us are still sitting. My attention is now diverted from the Lord and I wonder, "Oh, why is he standing?" It has a way of drawing attention to that person. It takes the attention off of the Lord and now attention is drawn to someone else.

He may say, "Well, that was not my intent." Well, that is what happens. God help us that no flesh should glory in His sight or no flesh should seek glory in His sight. When we are worshipping God and our hearts are being drawn and lifted by the Spirit into that conscious presence of God where we really are beginning to enter in, watch it! Observe it! It seems that there always is something that will come in to distract us from the Lord and get our attention upon some individual, some manifestation, or something that is going on.

And that is why I am almost fearful to see a moving of God's Spirit because someone is apt to do something that is untoward to take attention away from God and bring it on to themselves. Be careful. I would not want the responsibility of having taken attention away from God and placing it on me. I do not want to divert hearts from that devotion, praise, and worship of God and cause them to wonder what am I doing over there. I do not want that kind of a responsibility of having diverted anyone's attention from the Lord. You see, the purpose of my ministry is to focus people's attention on Him, not to divert attention from Him to myself.

For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and
ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. (cf. [2 Corinthians 4:5](#))

And there it is. What do I preach about me? I am your servant for Jesus' sake. I am preaching the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is Lord. You are to serve Him. You are to honor Him. You are to glorify Him, not His instrument. And as a pastor, people often come to you because God used your life to help them in a time of need or God used your life to touch them with His Word. They come to you and begin to pour out upon you their praise, their devotion, and their love.

I had a funeral service the other day and a lady came up afterwards and said, "Oh Chuck, you are just so wonderful. Oh Chuck, you are the greatest. Oh Chuck, you are marvelous. You are just one hell of a guy." My whole flesh was going until she got to that "hell of a guy" part. I knew then that she did not know what she was talking about.

Unfortunately, there is a mentality that goes often with the ministry. It is developed fully within the Catholic system, the Nicolaitans, the priesthood over the laity. It is the mentality that

ministers are just sort of one little notch closer to God or one little step higher, as though, “I am your instrument through which you can touch God.”

There is an interesting poem about this preacher who, every day was going up into the top of the steeple that he might be closer to God, get God’s message, and call it down upon the people. And one day, he was up there in the steeple seeking to hear the voice of God and he cried, “Oh God, where are You?” And God spoke to him and he heard the voice from down below saying, “I am down here among the people.”

Sometimes we put ourselves above the people, yet Jesus walked among the people. We preach ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake, not your lords, not this doctrine of shepherding. I am not the lord over you. Jesus Christ is the Lord. I am your servant for Jesus’ sake.

But we have this treasure in earthen vessels. ([2 Corinthians 4:7](#))

What treasure? The gospel that we are proclaiming is the glorious treasure. It is the greatest news that man every heard. It is the greatest treasure that anybody could ever have. It brings man to eternal riches.

This glorious treasure is actually the gospel of Christ in you, the hope of glory. This glorious treasure is the mystery of God revealed now through the church with all the richness of the kingdom of God and its glories for all eternity. Jesus Christ will come and dwell in your heart and life, transform you, and make you into the image of God. This is the glorious treasure. And where did God put it? He put it in earthen vessels, or in clay pots.

Now Jesus Christ is surely the greatest treasure in all the universe. The knowledge of Jesus Christ is the greatest treasure in all the universe. Paul said concerning the past, the law—“Those things which were gain to me I counted loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ” (cf. [Philippians 3:7](#)). This is indeed glorious treasure. Paul was willing to count everything loss for this glorious treasure. He said, “It is the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ, for whom I suffer the loss of all things, counting them but refuse that I might know Him and be found in Him” (cf. [Philippians 3:8](#)).

God takes the most valuable treasure and He puts it in the most common thing, a clay pot. We have this treasure in earthen vessels. Our problem is, too many times they are cracked pots. This treasure is in earthen vessels. Why? It is so that “the glory of the excellency or the power of the excellency may be of God and not of us” (cf. [2 Corinthians 4:7](#)). In other words, God has done something that is absolutely ludicrous. He has made you the instrument to contain the treasure. This glorious, valuable treasure, He has placed in you. He has done something that is totally ludicrous, for the purpose that the attention, the honor, the power, and the glory might be of God and not of us. Now if I try to reverse that, if I try to magnify the earthen vessel, if I try to bring glory and honor to the earthen vessel, God will put me on a shelf.

You see, I am to contain God. In his book, *The Deep Things of God*, Norman Grubb said, “The highest capacity of man is that of a container.” He meant that we could actually contain God. I heard him speak on this subject at Forest Home several years ago. I was deeply impressed. I bought all of his books, went home, read them and was not impressed. That is good because God removes our idols in a hurry. I began to see a flaw in what he was saying as he developed his message. When I went out of that service I was floating. “I am a container. I contain the God that created the universe. God who called the light to shine out of darkness is now shining in my heart. I am containing God. Hallelujah! I have come to the ultimate intention and purposes of God. I am

His container. I am containing the eternal God in this earthen vessel.” I was thrilled. But as I began to think about it and pray about it, I thought, “Hey wait a minute. No, that is not true. That is not what the Bible really teaches is the highest capacity of man, to contain God. The highest capacity is that God might flow forth from my life to others.” You see, God is not satisfied with me being a container. The contents must flow out in such a way that it will help and minister to those who are in need.

So we have this treasure in earthen vessels. I am just the container from which God is to flow forth into the lives of others. And as a container, I must be careful that as the contents flow out from me, they flow out in as pure a form as possible. I preach not myself but Christ. I do not want the contents to taste of me. You might have a container in your refrigerator in which you keep water and that container has a weird taste to it. Maybe you had cantaloupe in it at one time and the cantaloupe still is impregnated a bit into the plastic so that every time you go to get a drink of water you get a taste of stale cantaloupe. You are thirsty. You are wanting to get a drink. You go to the refrigerator and there is some water. You drink it and then yuck, you get the taste of the container, not the pureness of the water. You get now the taste of the container. You may say, “Get rid of that thing! I cannot stand that taste.”

The thirsty world is looking or dying for something to drink and they come to hear. Too often as the contents flow out, it has such a taste of me. People say, “Yuck! I do not like the aftertaste.” Let the contents flow out in as pure and unadulterated form as possible, not handling the Word craftily, deceitfully, but honestly. Let the contents flow out from you in a pure form. “For we have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us.”

Who is sufficient for these things? Not me. The responsibility is too great. I cannot handle it. My flesh is incorrigible. I really cannot control it. My only hope is to fasten my eyes upon Him and allow His Spirit to work in me, changing me from glory to glory into that same image. Because His sufficiency has been given unto me, I have to trust in Christ for every phase of my ministry. I have to trust in Christ for every message that I bring to people. I have to trust in Jesus Christ for my every action before the people. The moment I think I can do something in myself, I am going to stumble and misrepresent God before them. Yes, we do have a tremendous responsibility and yes, we must depend upon the Lord completely or we are going to blow it.

Bibliography:

Grubb, Norman, *The Deep Things of God*, Lutterworth Press, London, 1958.