

**THE  
BON AIR  
PULPIT**

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**Scripture: *II Corinthians 3:18***

**Sermon: *God's Plan for My Life***

For many of us the first contact we ever had with God is that we want him to do something for us. And the reason is that we first begin to think about him in the middle of our difficulty or in the middle of trouble and what we want God to do primarily is to change the circumstance. And very often God does move to change the situation and to change the circumstance and relieve us of tremendous difficulties and problems. But when we read the Bible we understand that is not his primary concern for us. His primary concern is not to do something for us, so much as it is to do something in us. Not so much to change the circumstance but to change our character. Now, if you understand that, then you realize that all of the good things and all of the bad things God works together so that he can help you to become what he dreams for you to be. God is like a divine sculptor, and he just keeps chiseling away on all of our lives until we actually become his dream for us. Now I often say sometimes God works very slow, it's almost like leaves growing and sometimes he comes and just kicks down the door and he says this is what I want you to do but however he does it you need to understand that God's purpose is to do something in your life, to change your character, to help you to become what he dreams for you to be. Now the question that we all need to ask then is, what is then the ultimate goal he has for us. And the ultimate goal the Bible says he asks for us is that we would have within our lives the same characteristics that were in the life of Jesus.

If you have given your heart and your life to Christ you are known as a Christian. Word has Christ at the front and it has a little diminutive suffix at the end, *ian*, and what they means simply is that you are a small Christ. And what he wants you to become, he wants you to become like him in that all of the characteristics he had, you may have in your life.

Scripture I wanted to read for you today is where Paul is telling us how that can happen. And he tells us how God worked in the old Testament in that he gave us the law and he said as wonderful as the law was, it was kind of trying to look at God through a cloth. The law came to tell us what to believe and how to behave. But he said that when Jesus came it is like taking the cloth out and you really see the presence of God and what happens is then you start becoming the person on the inside that God wants you to be. You see what God wants with you is not that you would have a rule so that you would know what he wants you to do, what he really wants is that you would become the kind of person that would normally, naturally express the principles of God in your life. It is just almost like breathing the air.

I wanted to read for you the final passage out of that whole chapter that we read. Let me read it for you. This is II Corinthians 3:18. And we all don't have a cloth over our face. We can all contemplate the Lord's glory. And we are being transformed into his likeness with an ever-increasing glory which comes from the Lord which is the spirit. So let me tell you what is happening in your life if you are a believer. You are on an adventure. You are on a journey. And the journey is, the longer you walk with him and the more you contemplate upon him and the more you think about him the more and more God is making you to become like Jesus Christ. Years ago I asked myself the question, now what does that mean practically? What does that mean to become like Jesus? And I was introduced to a group from England who helped me to understand that question, and all of these years I have just kept it close to me as I tried to think about what that meant on my journey of trying to become like Jesus. Let me share with you what they taught me today. The first thing they said is, being like Jesus is that you are dominated by a relationship with God. Now someone has said that you can judge in your life your relationship to God by three words. In some people, God is present. In some people, God is prominent. But in some people, God is pre-eminent. Simply, they cannot think of life without living it in him. The number one relationship in their life is their relationship to God. I was talking with a couple the other day, a man and wife, and the man turned to me and he said, "We have been married for this period of years," and he said to me with a smile, "You know, she's the second most important person in my life." I started to say, "You've had it now." Then he turned and said, "The most important person in my life is God, the second most important is my wife."

Jesus had a relationship with God that dominated his entire life. Look at the very beginning of his life. He is 12 years of age, his parents take him down to the temple, he turns to his parents and he says, "*Don't you know I have to be about my Father's business?*" Here he is at the end of his life a little over 20 years later the last words come out of his mouth, "*Father into thy hands I commend my spirit.*" At the first of his life, at the end of his life, you cannot think of Jesus without thinking about his relationship to God. I mean, he loved to be in his presence.

Now if you were an Orthodox Jew in Jesus' life you would pray at 10, 2, and 4. I think Jesus probably prayed at 10, 2 and 4 as an Orthodox Jew but what Jesus did was, he would go all night and pray with God. Every time he would see God, he felt comfortable in the presence of God, he wanted to be with God. And he just enjoyed it, I mean he just couldn't think of life without God. He was the person that adopted the principles of God for his life. He wanted to live like God wanted him to live. You can't think of Jesus sitting down arguing with God, should I do this or not do this or I don't want to do this instead I want to do this. Somebody said Jesus always did what he wanted to do but he always did what God wanted him to do. I mean, his heart was that he wanted to please God.

In some ways that is true but if that was who Jesus is, and if God is trying to make us like him, then you can live a life where the number one relationship in your life is with God. And if you have brought areas of your life whether it is your social life, whether it is your friends life, whether it is your work life, whether it is your money life, whatever kind of sections of life that you have, if you can think of that section of your life without any relationship to God then you could not approach what Jesus did.

All of us need to have what I call a John the Baptist experience. You will remember John who was on the stage and everybody was coming to him and then all of a sudden Jesus came and Jesus was first and on the stage and John said, I must decrease, he must increase. And the goal of all of our life is that we become less and less and our desire is that he will come more and more. Used to sing a song years ago. Less of me and More of Him. That all that my relationships is, is that I will be dominated by a relationship to God.

Second thing Jesus was that he was motivated by a task to do. I don't know whether you have ever taken a concordance and just looked up all the little statements that said I have come too. But if you do that there are 11 of them and what some of them, Jesus said, I have come to save the lost, I've come to do the will of God, there are 11 of them. You cannot think of Jesus without realizing he was on a divine mission. That he came sent from God to do what God wanted him to do. Now what is important to understand is that while that was the engine that drove him, that what needs to motivate and drive you is that you too feel that you are on a mission from God. Now often people come to me and say, I don't know really know what I'm to do in this circumstance. And I say to them there is a bigger question. The bigger question is, do you understand that you are here on earth to fulfill a mission that God has sent you to accomplish?

Just as Jesus was sent, I believe I was sent, I believe you were sent, I believe every one of us was sent to accomplish the task that God has given us to do. Now I read a beautiful story one day about a man who sat in a matinee movie, fire broke out, and before the firemen could get there he went back in the fire and pulled some people out and he was the hero of the day. People said that was so heroic and wonderful and he was quoted as saying, "Now I know why I was born." He felt the reason he was born is he could save those people. Well, of course that's true. But the problem is, if you adopt that philosophy of life, all you end up is saying I was here to do one thing in life. Let me show you how it works. Some of you are here today with small children. I think you were sent here to tell those children how a Christian parent ought to raise his children. Some of you are in jobs. I think that God gave you those jobs so that you could show how a Christian is to live in our jobs. I think all of your life is to be asked the question, how can I be on a mission from God, how can I demonstrate the power of God?

I was introduced to that years ago with a football coach. His name is Frank Broils. He was the head football coach of the University of Arkansas, later became the athletic director of UofA and later became a national sports director and he said, "Many people think that I am a coach who is a Christian." He said, "No, I am a Christian who expresses my Christian life through being a coach. It is through being a coach that then I can impact young men for the glory of God. Now I want you to take that formula today. I am a wife. But I am a Christian who uses the role of being a wife as expressing my relationship to God. I am a parent who uses my relationship to God to impact children. I am a computer person. I use my work to do what God has sent me here to do. All of your life is that you are on mission. And all of your life is that whatever God sends in your life I run that through the filter of then of saying as a Christian how can I

accomplish what God wants me to do”? \* He was motivated by a task to do but he was captivated by the principle of love.

You will recall that even when he tried to describe to us what religion was all about he said religion is about loving God. And he said, “If you want to understand about how religion affects you in your everyday life , religion is loving others like you love yourself.” I mean his whole concept was love.

I mentioned a while ago that sometimes Jesus just kicked down doors. On this business of loving others, Jesus just kicked down doors. We mentioned earlier about these children being in our worship service. Do you know before Jesus, not a child would be in this room. Because children were not accepted until they became adults. More than half of this congregation wouldn't be here because you are a women. You would not be here and Jesus was the one who kicked down the door and said women are equal in God's sight. People who were lepers, who used to have to holler, *unclean, unclean* if a person came within a hundred miles of them, Jesus walked over to him and touched him. Those people who were tax collectors for the Romans, he called one of them to be his apostle. Jesus loved them all.

One of my favorite Christians is a man by the name of Dr. Paul Brand. Dr. Brand is a surgeon. He spent many years of his life in India and he became known as the foremost surgeon in the world on the human hand. Leprosy so often destroys hands and he dedicated his life in helping people to have hands that they could use. He tells the story of John the Leper. John waited for many years to seek medical help and when he came, he said half of his face was almost paralyzed. That when he smiled it looked like half of his face worked and half of it didn't. Part of his face had blotches of white that leprosy often brings. He actually had to have his eyelids almost completely closed because the sun was destroying his eyes because of leprosy and he said he was mad and mean. But Mrs. Brand took a special interest in John, helped John to know that God loved him and cared for him. John gave his heart and his life to Christ and they said, in a bathtub at the leper colony, Dr. Brand baptized John. He said it wasn't long before John came to him and he said, “You know what I want to do?” “I want to go to a church. I don't just want to sit in this leper colony and worship, I want to go to a church,” and Dr. Brand said, “Big test. When he goes to the church, are those people going to draw away and say, he's so different we can't have a part of him.” But without telling anybody one Sunday he went by and told John, this is the day we are going to church and so they went to the little church. He said he knew it was so unusual when the door opened here was the white surgeon and here was John the Leper and he just stood there a moment and waited. Every body in the little church turned around and saw John the Leper and Dr. Brand said, “What are they going to do.” And he said, “One of the men put down his Bible and walked to the back, took John the Leper by the hand, walked him down and patted the pew next to him and said, “Sit here.” You know what it means to be like Jesus? It means to pat the pew for the disenfranchised and the different and the people who feel left out and the people who are hurt and the people who wonder why in the world would I go to church. They are just going to make me feel worse than I feel right now and you just pat the pew and say in the name of Jesus we welcome you. If you want to be like Jesus you are going to find a life that is captivated by the principle of love.

Here is the last one. Jesus was dedicated to a life of selflessness. Every year in our church we kind of adopt a church theme. The theme this year is *The Year of the Servant* and our theme verse this year is the word of Jesus, I have not come to be served but to serve. And he said let me tell you how you can judge how you are doing in your life. If you want to determine whether you are great or whether you are not, he that is greatest among you let him be your servant.

All of us know the devil pronouns, I, my and mine. And one of the hardest things in the world is to get us out of our tunnel vision that we don't ask what is in it for me. That we ask how can I help you? And one of the biggest challenges that all of us confront is to say , Lord, I have come and I today want to be your servant. You might recall that in the story that Jesus told of the Good Samaritan that really there is three philosophies of life. Thieves said, “What is yours is mine and I will take it.” And the religious people came and they said, “What is mine is mine and I will keep it.” And the Good Samaritan came by and said, “What is mine is yours if you need it.” To be able to get outside of yourself and say in the name of Jesus I want to serve.

Now you know when I came across these principles so many years ago and when I relived them recently I had to ask myself the question that one day I will sit in a pew and not be a pastor of a church and the question came to me was, “What do you really want to be remembered for? Do you want to be remembered for what you said or what you did? Or do you want to be remembered as a person who modeled what it means to be like Jesus?” It is not an easy question to answer, but I wanted to ask it to you.

When you come to the end, do you want people to say, remember what you did or what you said or what you gave or do you want to be remembered of who you became like.?

Let me tell you if that is not your goal, it's the goal of God. He wants you to become like Jesus and he said the more we contemplate him and the more we think about him he is in the process of transforming us moment by moment until we receive more and more of the glory of God. I hope not a person will walk out of our building today saying I am just content with who I am but that you will understand what God is trying to do in your life and you say today more than anything God I want to cooperate with you. There are some people in our room today who need very, very much to give your heart and your life to Christ. The greatest goal of living is to become like Jesus. You need to give your life to him. There are people in this room today who are already believers, who say, you know, I need to come to be a part of that church. That's a part of my process of becoming more and more like him and I can study and grow and help and serve and I am going to come and we're going to come and we're going to be part of this fellowship and God is trying to build a group of people here and when they go back, when people go by Bon Air Baptist Church they will say, "That's a group of people like Jesus."