

James T. Jeremiah
The Importance of the Christian Life
May 9, 1976

Transcript

James T. Jeremiah:

Today, I'd like to invite your attention to begin with, with a portion of the scripture in the tenth chapter of John. If you'll open your Bibles to the tenth chapter of that wonderful book, I want to read the portion of scripture that we want to use as our theme for the studies this week. We will not be taking a study of that verse particularly, but simply using it as a theme. I recognize that this is Mother's Day, and I would delight in bringing a message on that important subject for there is a great deal in the Bible about mothers.

James T. Jeremiah:

But I want to deal with a theme this week that I think would have a great deal to do with homes, and the Christian home, because it deals with a matter of the Christian life, the importance of the life in Jesus Christ as He lives in and through us. And we find the key to this in part at least, in this portion of scripture. Beginning with verse 9, let me read just a few verses. The Lord Jesus Christ in John chapter 10, verse 9, is speaking, and He says: "I am the door: by me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."

James T. Jeremiah:

Let's pray God will speak to our hearts today. Our father, we are needy people, and the speaker this morning is a needy person who needs thy strength and grace in order to proclaim the Word of truth. We pray that the Spirit of God will use His Word today to encourage us, to strengthen us, to challenge us, to convict us, bring us where we ought to be in thy presence and in thy service. In Jesus name. Amen.

James T. Jeremiah:

Jesus said, "I have come that you might have life and that you might have it more abundantly." I do not believe Jesus is saying, now I have come that you might have life as one part of your experience and subsequently have an abundant experience beyond that. I believe He's saying to us that He has come, already arrived, already gone to the cross now as we look back. That we might be saved and that we might enjoy and have a satisfaction and an abundance in the life that He has provided for us. As we think about these verses in particular this morning, the Lord Jesus presents a tremendous opportunity to all. He said, "I am the door." He is still saying that. And this is interesting because He reminds us on other occasions that He is the only way from earth to heaven by which we may be accepted before the Father.

James T. Jeremiah:

He places here a matter of responsibility. The "if any man" phrase in this text shows us some responsibility. In other words, the gospel is offered, the message is offered, but we are responsible to deal with Him and to be responsible in our response. He deals with the matter of safety. He shall enter in and shall be saved. Thank God for that wonderful truth. The Bible teaches all the way through from the very beginning to the very end that if any man come to Jesus Christ he can be saved, he can be delivered, he can be made safe. He deals with liberty. Thank God for the liberty and the Christian life. He may go in and out. And then he deals with a great truth of victory. We may have life more abundantly.

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Now the interesting thing about the Christian life is that it has a beginning. There must be a crisis in every life before there can be a salvation in any life. The Lord God makes it very clear that men need to be born again, women need to be born again. There must be a starting point in the Christian life. It doesn't just mean that because we were born in a beautiful land and we like our country and we have a good church and we come from a good family, that necessarily that means we're God's people. There is no such thing in the Word of God, as I'm sure all of us are aware, as the doctrine so propagated in the past few years as the Universal Fatherhood of God and Brotherhood of Man. We are sinners by nature, by choice, by practice. We are sons, not of God by nature, but sons of Adam. And we are children of Satan as the Word of God makes it clear in other places.

James T. Jeremiah:

Now this morning, in dealing with this matter of the Christian life and the abundant life, one aspect of it I want to begin with where we ought to begin. With the beginning. Where do we start. And in dealing with this subject we have to deal with negatives as well as positives. As I think about the Christian life I am reminded so often of one of the truths that thrills my soul. And that is, when I became a Christian something happened in my behalf in heaven and something happened in my life on earth. When I trusted Jesus Christ, and when you trusted Him as your Savior, the Bible teaches that we have been declared righteous before the Father. God imputes His righteousness to us. He puts it on our account, our record. Because of what Jesus Christ has done, He imputes His righteousness, He reckons His righteousness, He accounts His righteousness to us in His presence.

James T. Jeremiah:

That means to me a wonderful thing. That no matter how old a child of God may be, how young he may be, how soon or how late in life he trusted Jesus, he has the same standing before a Holy God because he stands in the beloved one accepted in Jesus Christ. Another aspect, which is wonderful too, and that is, God not only imputes His righteousness to us at the throne of heaven so that we stand accepted in the beloved now, but He imparts His life to us in the new birth, so that when we receive Him we receive eternal life. Principally, I believe because we receive His life. Whereby are given unto you exceeding great and precious promises that by these promises you might be partakers of a divine nature. Second Peter 1:4. And as you think of this impartation of life, this is the aspect we want to deal with, particularly this morning and possibly through the rest of these days in the Bible Conference.

James T. Jeremiah:

What happens when one becomes a Christian? When one becomes a child of God? When he has the life, the abundant life? The Bible is so clear on this and yet people in the world in which we live seem to be in the dark about it. At the expense of being criticized for dealing with negatives, I want to deal with what it isn't. And the reason I want to deal with this is because God's Word deals with it. And whenever God's Word deals with the negatives as well as positives, there is a good reason why we ought to follow the same procedure.

James T. Jeremiah:

And the message is based this morning on a portion of scripture in the very first chapter of this gospel. And it's a very familiar scripture and for this reason I suppose it's difficult to come and explain what, in this church at least, has been explained over and over again and most of you people know what this is

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before I talk about it. But if I can do one thing in this Bible Conference that I think may be helpful, and that is, to bear witness to what has already been said and pray God will use it in our hearts for His glory.

James T. Jeremiah:

Let's look for a few minutes then at the first chapter of John's gospel, beginning with verse 12. John chapter 1, verse 12. Remember now, we're talking about the beginning of this abundant life which Christ has provided for us. "I have come," He said, "that you might have life and that you might have it more abundantly." Since He said that, means that, and this is a reality, how does that become a reality in experience in the lives of people today? We read: But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name. And here's the text: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. Now that text tells us how we do not become the recipients of the abundant life. And it tells us very pointedly how we may.

James T. Jeremiah:

Let's talk about the negatives. I presume the reason why so many people follow false teaching is because there are so many false teachings to follow. The reason why so many are on the wrong road that does not lead to heaven is because there are more wrong roads than there are right ones. There is only one right way. Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man cometh unto the Father but by me."

James T. Jeremiah:

Now in this text, the scriptures tell us that this new life is not found in human relationship. We're not born of blood or of bloods. We're not Christians by what our parents have done for us. There're multiplied thousands of people who think that since they were born in a good home, they had good mothers and good fathers, this makes them Christians. There isn't anything farther from the truth than that. We were born of sinful parents. And because we were so born, we have sinned. And this goes all the way back through all the generations of time.

James T. Jeremiah:

And there are so many things about our children, and may I also say about our grandchildren, that remind us of ourselves. Because we are of the same nature. The Word of God says that there is no salvation just by natural birth. Now if you were born in a Christian home, and I hope you were, you have this advantage that you heard the gospel, you had a father and mother who prayed for you, who loved you and wanted to see you saved. But they couldn't save you. They couldn't bring life to you, though maybe they would desire to do it. They could simply introduce you to the Savior and He had to do the saving.

James T. Jeremiah:

Paul reminds Timothy that he was saved by grace and not by his relationship to his mother or his grandmother. He reminds this young man in the letter he wrote to him as a young preacher, that he ought to stir up the gift of God that was in him. Now I'm sure that this could refer to Timothy's abilities, but there is one gift that God gave him that started him on the Christian life and that is the gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. We are not born into the family of God simply because we were born into a good family. We are not born of bloods. The first birth did not make heaven our home.

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James T. Jeremiah:

I remember reading somewhere about a woman who was asked whether or not she had been born again. She must have been a very dignified lady, somebody suggested with her glasses on a stick you know, and she was looking out with great dignity. And she looked at this Christian worker in disdain and ridicule and said, "Why do you think I need to be born again? I was born in Boston the first time." Well, maybe not all of us have been born in Boston, and that would leave a whole lot of us out of the hope of heaven if being born in Boston would make us Christians. If you are born in a deacon's home, or a preacher's home, or a Sunday school teacher's home, that did not make you a Christian because we're not born of human relationship into the family of God.

James T. Jeremiah:

The next thing we notice in the text is, we're not born of the will of the flesh. And I like to think of this relationship to not being born into God's family by human resolution. What I do for myself. The will of the natural man rather than being for God, is opposed to God. Nature can never change itself. If ever there was a man who could have been born of God by his own religious background and his own religious resolution, that man was the apostle Paul. And I want to read this morning, Paul's testimony in regard to this very subject. You read it in the book of Philippians in chapter 3 in verse 5 to 7.

James T. Jeremiah:

Let me just call your attention to some of the things Paul said would not bring life from heaven to him. He said I was circumcised the eighth day. Here he boasts a little bit, perhaps telling about his position, his religious position. I was of the stock of Israel. He came from a good race. He was of the tribe of Benjamin. His tradition was certainly unbelievably great. He was an Hebrew of the Hebrews. And here you see a man who expresses what a Jew would at that time, a real spirit of patriotism. As touching law, a Pharisee. More orthodox than that you could not become. But he was a Pharisee. Concerning zeal, he had a reputation. Persecuting the church, touching the righteousness which is in the law. Blameless. His character was above reproach and above criticism.

James T. Jeremiah:

But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord. He goes on to tell us that all of this was simply refuse without help, without hope, without anything that could bring life to his heart, and a standing of righteousness before his God. Human resolution doesn't make it.

James T. Jeremiah:

Suppose now here's a person who has a bad habit. You say, "I'm gonna quit it and by quitting the habit I'll become a Christian." Or someone else says, "I have a bad disposition. I'm gonna try to get some psychological treatment and make myself a better person." Well perhaps you ought to do that anyway. I'm not sure. But let me tell you if you do, and while that may make you a better citizen and a better person to live with and all the rest, it will not make you a Christian. The fact of the matter is, much of this human resolution that we have to make ourselves more acceptable to God is absolutely destructive. It takes us farther from God than we were to start with.

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Reminds me of the man at the University of California at Berkeley who wrote a book on how to control termites. And he published this monograph in several copies of it. And they had so many they couldn't distribute them, so they stored them in one of the buildings of the University. And according to the story I received about this famous book on how to control termites, the books they stored in the storeroom, believe it or not, were eaten by the termites. Poor termites couldn't read and so they didn't know anything about that, you see.

James T. Jeremiah:

Well the very thing we think is going to be the help to us, and bringing us to God by putting our confidence in that kind of thing, will be our destruction. It is not by human relationship. It is not by human resolution. Nor is it by human rehabilitation. It's not by the will of man. It's not what others do for me. Ever there was a person who could save anyone, I suppose it could again be the apostle Paul. Paul knew it was impossible for him to do anything to save his friends or his relatives or his brethren, according to the flesh.

James T. Jeremiah:

You want to see a man with a passion for people? Then I would suggest you make a study of Romans 9:1-5 and Romans 10:1-3, where you'll read this of Paul: My heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is they might be saved. And then he goes on to say in his message: I would be glad to be accursed for my brethren according to the flesh. If I could just see them saved, I would be willing to be lost. But that would do nothing. For Paul was like all the rest of us. He was a sinner. And he couldn't die for sinners and save them, any more than you can or I can. We're all sinners.

James T. Jeremiah:

It's not by what Paul could do for the Jews that would save them. It's not what you can do for your neighbor that will save them. Not what I can do for my friends that will save them. It's not by the will of man. That means of course that people are not born again by religious ritual. They're not saved by religious connections. They don't become Christians because they belong to some order, religious or otherwise. Not the efforts of our friends, the persuasion of the preacher, the pressures of loved ones, the ordinances of the church. That will not do what needs to be done to have the abundant life. It isn't done. It isn't brought to being, into being, like that. We were born not by what our parents did for us, not what others do for us, not what we do for ourselves.

James T. Jeremiah:

I have a friend who serves as a chaplain in an institution in our state, a prison institution, where young men come anywhere from 18 to 23 years of age. And he tells me about the plan they have trying to rehabilitate them, making them first of all acquainted with prison life and then telling them how to prepare themselves and educate themselves within the prison walls. And they go through all of this experience. Some of them learn a trade and go out of the prison, only to come back. They had been rehabilitated. But this dear man of God has an interest in the souls of prisoners. And so he has everything going he can find to get the gospel to them. And when some of these prisoners come to know Jesus Christ they not only get rehabilitated so far as learning something to better serve in society, but they have regeneration in their hearts which makes it possible for them to live a life that's right and they don't come back to prison.

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James T. Jeremiah:

Man and woman, boy and girl, you need something more than just what somebody else does for you to make your society better and make you better for society. You need what the next step in this text says. Which were born not of the will of the flesh, not of bloods, not of the will of man, but born of God. Now that message, so often preached from this pulpit down through the years, sometimes I suspect becomes a little bit old hat to a lot of people. And they hear again, what do you mean preaching the new birth? We've heard it before. Yes, some of you have. But you yet have not been born again.

James T. Jeremiah:

It must be of some importance in the mind and the heart of our blessed Lord, because in dealing with a very religious man in the third chapter of the gospel of John, our Lord Jesus used the "verily verily" often used, as quoted in the King James version of the Bible. He uses it three times in one chapter concerning one great important truth, ye must be born again. Now it's interesting. As you think about the new birth and these three negatives where God tells us how we cannot be born again, that God uses in His Word and other places these three things from a positive sense that tells us how we can.

James T. Jeremiah:

Let me quote a couple of them to you. We're not born of seeds, not born of the blood, the natural birth. But in First Peter 1:23, the Spirit of God says being born not again, not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible, by the Word of God which liveth and abideth forever. Born of the seed of God's Word. That's why, in Calvary Baptist Church and any other Bible-believing church there is an emphasis upon preaching the word of God. Because the Word is the seed that God uses to bring life, and the new life, the abundant life, that we all need and some of us, thank God, by His grace possess. Not of the will of the flesh.

James T. Jeremiah:

But in the same gospel John 3:6 we're told: That which is born of the flesh is flesh, that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. There are two births. The natural birth, the spiritual birth. Born once, die twice. Born twice, you may die once. By the new birth, we are made children of God. Not by the will of man. But Paul writes in Philippians 2:13: For it is God who worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure. It's not my will that accomplishes it, but it's His will to do it in and through our lives.

James T. Jeremiah:

I believe, dear friend, that it is imperative that every single one of us enjoy the abundant life, but it's imperative that we understand how we enter in to that life. Sometimes I think even those of us who are accustomed to hearing Bible teaching and Bible preaching all the time have a feeling that maybe God in His great mercy will overlook our unwillingness to decide for Jesus, and when the day comes and we pass off this sphere of life, this sphere of the earth, and go out into eternity God in His mercy will somehow overlook it all. But such is not the case.

James T. Jeremiah:

During World War II, they tell us during the bombing raids by the British bombers that went over into France after the Nazis had taken over that country, one particular day they bombed a small city. People hearing those sirens and the warnings left, so many of them were saved so far as life was concerned but

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many of the buildings were destroyed. In one particular section of that city there was one building that stood and didn't fall in the crumbling ruins around it. The only thing that happened to that building was that the pressures of the explosions put a hole in the side of one of the walls. The people had fled but this beautiful palatial home, still standing, had a hole in the wall.

James T. Jeremiah:

Inside of this building there were beautiful carpets, beautiful furniture. The people were people of wealth and so they had everything, the finest. Draperies imported and all the rest of the fine things. After the bombers had dropped their load of destruction, flown back to England to the base, people were still away, but the animals in the community found their way through that hole in the wall, frightened perhaps because of the destruction around them. And they ran into the building. They destroyed the carpets. They pulled down the drapes. They ruined the interior of that palatial home.

James T. Jeremiah:

Now the reason for that is very obvious. They did it because they did not have natures compatible with a palace. If God would let you, or let me, go into His heaven without having received the abundant life in Jesus Christ, the new birth, we would destroy His heaven. God in His great plan beyond our understanding, permitted man to live on His earth. And he has wrought such havoc and destruction and corruption in it, that it is ruined in some areas, in some ways, many ways. But let me tell you friend, with a heart that loves you, wants to see you come to Christ, God will never permit you or permit me to enter His heaven without His life, because He will not tolerate His heaven being destroyed.

James T. Jeremiah:

If you do not have life, you're in death. If you don't have Christ, you're lost. And without Christ, to die and go into eternity means forever separated from Him, never to enjoy the heaven He has provided for those that love Him. Question I leave with you this morning is: Have you been born again? Have you believed really that Christ has come, that you might have life and that you might have it more abundantly? This is where it begins. With a new birth.

James T. Jeremiah:

There are mothers here, probably, who have never made Christ your Savior by faith. You do not have a Christian home because you do not have Christ in your heart and perhaps your husband doesn't know Him either. And ever there was a day when Christians need to think seriously about the importance of the Christian home, that day is now. And it's utterly impossible to have a Christian home without having a Christian mother and a Christian father, with Christ as the head of the house.