

Central Bible Church
Morning Service
January 18, 1981

Ray Whipps – Announcement from the Church Council of Central Bible Church

That was so beautifully done, Becky and Annette and appropriate for a time like this.

There is a matter of church business that needs to be taken care of at this time. I am Ray Whipps, Chairman of the Council at Central Bible Church and I have a letter from Pastor directed to me as being the Chairman.

Dear Ray,

In response to the majority vote of the Council on Saturday, January 17, by which they have asked for my resignation as Pastor of Central Bible Church I am hereby submitting my resignation to take effect immediately. I am deeply grateful to the Lord for the many blessings that my family and I have experienced during the years of our association with Central Bible. May the will of God be done in all of our lives in the coming days.

Sincerely yours in Christ,
L Dwight Custis

I know that we receive this with mixed emotions and thinking of our own country where we will have a new administration coming Tuesday, the Lord willing, the ending of the reign of one of our Presidents. We have all prayed and hoped that God would be in control of our country, that He has been and will be but we have not had to just hope. We know that God has been in control of Central Bible Church and that He will continue to be in control as long as we honor Him, and honor His Word, the Lord Jesus Christ and I know I speak for the Council and for me personally and for the congregation, those that are here, those that are not here. We express our love, appreciation, for the loving ministry of Dwight and Lucille, our love for them and for their families. And even in our Sunday School lesson today' in the Berachah Class in Luke 18:1 in the ending words of that verse, that men are to always pray and faint not. And it was pointed out that we either do one or the other and so I encourage each one of us to be praying for Dwight and Lucille that they will be lead into whatever ministry the Lord has for them. And I just know that we will be faithful in doing this. Thank you very much.

Sunday Morning Sermon
Text: Psalm 103
Pastor L Dwight Custis

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Yesterday when I left to go to the Council meeting Lucille and I knew that this was a possibility and we prayed together that the Lord's will would be done. We accept the Council action as the Lord's will and so I have submitted by resignation.

The motion that was presented to the Council was that the resignation be effective on the first of February, but I asked to be relieved immediately. I felt in view of the circumstances that there was no point in delaying it any more. So this is my last service with you this morning. I do plan to be back for the wedding of Jim Byrne and Becky Johnson, that had already been arranged, but I don't feel that it would be proper for me to be involved in any further Central Bible weddings or funerals after this. I trust that you all will respect my convictions in that.

The question also came up of a farewell for us. Lucille and I of course have been living in the shadow of this for a long time and many weeks ago we decided that that just couldn't be under the circumstances. So I hope that you will understand that too. We are going to leave right after the service is over this morning. We won't be at the doors as we usually are. But I do want to express my deep gratitude to the Lord for the opportunity of having been able to serve Him here at Central Bible. While the work hasn't been easy, the Lord never promises His work is going to be easy. And many of you are very dear friends of ours and always will be and you will always be upon our hearts. So we thank you for your many kindnesses to us and I trust that those of you who prayed for us will continue to do so. We don't have any plans as far as the future is concerned. We are just waiting upon the Lord to see what His leading will be.

When it was decided that I should speak this morning, of course the question came up what do you say at a time like this? And since I have never been in a situation like this before it was difficult for me to decide. In fact I didn't decide until about 7:00 this morning. But my great concern for this service this morning and for our departure from the ministry here is that the Lord would be pleased.

One of our ladies called me this last week to ask me some questions about different verses of Scripture and one of the verses that she asked me about was the verse, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." And as I answered her question, I didn't know that I would be faced with that so soon but I stand before you this morning in fear and trembling in the sense that I don't want anything that is said or done or even anything in my own heart this morning to be displeasing to the Lord. I think that is the most important thing. I have told some of you we have a poem on our wall at home and the last verse of it reads, and I take this for the service this morning and for today,

In the sweet fear of Jesus let me begin each day
Serving or resting always under His gentle sway
All that I say directed, all that I plan conceived
With the remembrance present, Jesus must not be grieved.

I have decided to take Psalm 103 this morning. If you have your Bibles with you, and most of you do, will you just turn to that passage. I felt that probably the safest thing to talk about this morning was myself in the sense of letting you know how I react to this situation and I hope that my reaction possibly be of help to many of you. I have mentioned several times that I don't usually take a verse for a year and in fact I don't remember that I have ever done this before. But the Lord who knows all things must have known what was coming, and I know that He did. My heart was directed especially to Psalm 16:8 in which David says, "I have set the Lord always before me because he is at my right hand I shall not be moved." The word "moved" there means to totter, or to fall, or to stumble. In all of the circumstances leading up to this I have sought to set the Lord before me because I believe very firmly in a sovereign God and I know that He works in all of our circumstances. I don't have any other way to have peace except getting my eyes on the Lord and keeping them there. That fits right in with Isaiah 26:3-4, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is

stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.” And so as I think of my ministry here I don't regret anything that I have preached. I wish that I had preached it better. I told the members of the Council yesterday, I wish that more of them had been able to see what I have been preaching. But as I think about the circumstances that we all face this morning I have found real comfort in Psalm 103 and I just want to briefly share these with you this morning.

1. Praise to God (103:1-5)

The Psalm begins with praise to the Lord, and I would like to begin this way. You know there are so many passages in the Word that talk about praising the Lord, and praising the Lord at all times. It teaches us that there never can be a situation that can arise in your life and my life for which we should not praise the Lord. It may hurt. We may not understand it, but God is in control and God works all things together for good, and He works things according to the council of His own will. So that in our deepest hour of trial it is wonderful to know that we can say with David, “Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the LORD, O my soul and forget not all his benefits.” And I was especially interested in looking at this psalm again this morning to see that David is talking to himself here. There are several passages of Scripture that indicate this. There are times when you know we have to minister to ourselves. I don't know what David may have been facing as he wrote this Psalm, but he was telling himself when he says, “Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name.” And so one of the ways in which we can face our trials and difficulties in a very important way is to begin with the recognition that God is in control; that all of our blessings come from Him. Even our trials come from Him, and He takes all of these circumstances, and not only works them for His glory but for our good as well.

2. The Ways of the Lord (103:6-7)

The second thing in this Psalm that I would like for you to see is that which is expressed in verse 7. I am not giving you an exposition of the Psalm this morning. I am just thinking with you about the Psalm and the way that the Lord has been ministering to my own heart. “He made known his ways unto Moses, His acts unto the children of Israel.” The ways of the Lord. In Psalm 18:30, David says, “As for God, his way is perfect.” It is one thing to say this when things go the way you would like for them to go, and you see the answers to prayer that you would like to see. But I have been reminded this morning that this is just as true when things go the opposite direction: “His way is perfect” In Isaiah 55, the Lord reminds us that His ways and our ways are different and His thoughts and our thoughts are different. But it also says in that passages that as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are His ways higher than our ways and His thoughts than our thoughts. And so, not only are God's ways different from our ways but His ways are infinitely better. I don't understand it this morning, but I believe it and I am comforted by it. And when Paul concludes that wonderful 11th chapter of Romans, his heart just seems to be overwhelmed with the truth of the Gospel and the ways of the Lord and he says, “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgements, and his ways past finding out.”

One of my daughters-in-law, Martha wrote out in calligraphy a poem that has been very dear to me, and Gary and Martha gave it to me for Christmas. I was reading it this morning and it is a poem that I told some of you about, several months ago now. I just heard a part of it and I recognized that it was probably a hymn. When David Blood and I were down at Rockaway, Oregon for a missionary conference, we were walking on the beach and I told him about the first line of this poem. I said, “David I have never heard that before. Have you heard it?” As soon as I asked the question, he started to quote it. As we walked down the beach, he gave me all the verses of this song from memory. So I said, “Would you write it out for me because I would like to have it.” So, a week or so after the conference was over I got a letter from him in which he had enclosed this poem. I was delighted to get it and to see the whole thing. I learned at that time that it was one of John Newton's hymns. A short time after that, I was reading Packer's book, Knowing God, and I came to the chapter which so many have mentioned as a rich blessing. The chapter is entitled “These Inward Trials.” If you haven't read his book get the book and read the chapter at least. But at the end of this I found this poem

again. It seems that when the Lord is dealing with you, you often get the same emphasis or the same verse of Scripture from several different directions. So when this came up this way, I realized that the Lord had it for me. And I read this this morning in connection with my own desire for Central Bible Church, that we would see the hand of the Lord in a special way here. It hasn't pleased the Lord to answer that desire, but this is the way the poem goes:

I asked the Lord, that I might grow
In faith, and love, and every grace;
Might more of His salvation know,
And seek, more earnestly, His face.

I hoped that in some favored hour
At once He'd answer my request,
and by His love's constraining power
Subdue my sins, and give me rest.

Instead of this, He made me feel
the hidden evils of my heart;
And let the angry powers of hell
Assault my soul in every part.

Yea more, with His own hand He seemed
Intent to aggravate my woe;
Crossed all the fair designs I schemed,
Blasted my gourds, and laid me low.

"Lord, why is this?" I trembling cried,
"Wilt thou pursue Thy worm to death?"
"Tis in this way," the Lord replied,
"I answer prayer for grace and faith.

"These inward trials I employ
From self and pride to set thee free;
And break thy schemes of earthly joy,
That thou mayst seek thy all in Me."

[These Inward Trials, by John Newton]

I am sure it is true with everyone of us as it was true of Moses, the Lord makes known His ways to us. And the only way we can learn the ways of the Lord is by the experiences, the trials, the testings that He leads us through. But it was a blessing for me to see this morning, that in all of this the Lord was not only calling upon me to praise Him when I couldn't understand, but to rest in the fact that His way is perfect.

3. The Mercies of God (103:8-18)

But there is a third thing that is mentioned in this song and David devotes a lot of time to this when after speaking of how the Lord makes known His ways, He mentions the mercy of God. And I am thankful this morning for the mercies of the Lord. I am thankful that He never leads us through any trial or testing and leaves us alone. Listen to these verses:

⁸ The LORD *is* merciful and gracious,
Slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.

⁹ He will not always chide:
Neither will he keep *his anger* for ever.

¹⁰ He hath not dealt with us after our sins;
Nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.

¹¹ For as the heaven is high above the earth,
So great is his mercy toward them that fear him.

¹² As far as the east is from the west,
So far hath he removed our transgressions from us.

¹³ Like as a father pitieth *his* children,
So the LORD pitieth them that fear him.

¹⁴ For he knoweth our frame;
He remembereth that we *are* dust.

¹⁵ *As for* man, his days *are* as grass;
As a flower of the field, so he flourisheth.

¹⁶ For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone;
And the place thereof shall know it no more.

¹⁷ But the mercy of the LORD *is* from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him,
And his righteousness unto children's children;

¹⁸ To such as keep his covenant,
And to those that remember his commandments to do them.

And that is true this morning. The mercies of the Lord are inexhaustible. Most of us have tapped the mercies of God in the past and we are going to have to tap the mercies of God again in the days to come. And isn't it great to know that those mercies regardless of how severe the trial may be, those mercies are inexhaustible. Jeremiah said it is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because "His compassions fail not," and "His mercies are new every morning" (Lamentations 3:22-23). And how wonderful it is to see this. And we see this in this Psalm in a most encouraging way, because we see this in the light of man's sin, and we see this in the light of man's frailty and his failure. And of course this exalts the grace of God, doesn't it? It exalts the mercy of God. If we deserved His mercy or if we had to deserve His mercy before we could receive it none of us would ever experience it.

And as I read through this Psalm it seemed to me that David was drawing a contrast between a great God on the one hand and a sinful frail human being who is here for a time and passes away just like the wind going over the flowers of the field. And I think that on the basis of this, this in a sense has been characteristic of my ministry, I trust. I trust that you have seen that. *But I would like for you to remember me as a Pastor who had nothing good to say about the natural heart of man. But I also want you to remember me as a pastor who was at a loss to find the right words and enough to say about the greatness, the majesty, the glory, the wisdom, the power, the love, the grace, the faithfulness, the sufficiency of our wonderful God, of the Lord Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit. That's the way I want you to remember me.*

4. The Sovereignty of God (103:19)

There is a fourth thing that I want you to see here. Verse 19, You know I think when I first started to study prophesy, I felt that when the Lord Jesus Christ comes back to earth as King of kings and Lord of Lords that then He would be sovereign. I love this 19th verse because it means that in David's day God was sovereign. It means that in our day God is sovereign; that He sits upon the throne of heaven and that He reigns over all. And you know we as men and women, as His children seek to determine what the will of God is. That was the question before all of us in the Council meeting yesterday and as I say I am perfectly satisfied that the will of God is done because I believe in the greatness of the Lord.

¹⁹ The LORD hath prepared his throne in the heavens;
And his kingdom ruleth over all.

It would be impossible, utterly impossible, for us to have peace if we could not believe that God is working all things out in accordance with His will. I firmly believe that nobody can stand in His way. I cannot stand in His way. God is the One Who is sovereign over all of the affairs of man.

5. Praise to God (103:20-22)

Now when David got to this point in the Psalm, you notice that he reverts back to the way he started. But he does so with a slight difference. And I want you to see this. I mentioned as we first started to look at this Psalm this morning that David was talking to himself. Will you notice that as he goes down through the Psalm, he begins to speak to the Lord's people and he uses the words "our" and "we." So that in verse 10 he says, "He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities." Verse 12, "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us." Verse 14, "For he knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust." So he starts with himself and then he includes the people of God and will you notice what he does in verse 20? By this time his heart is so overwhelmed with the wonder and majesty and glory of God that he shouts to the angels whom he evidently anticipates are looking and listening, "Bless the LORD, ye his angels that excel in strength, that do his commandments harkening unto the voice of his word."

You see even the angels in heaven are occupied with praising the Lord and don't have anything that is more important to do than to be worshipping Him. When Isaiah looked into heaven and saw the Lord sitting upon the throne he saw the angels and he heard the angels as they were singing, "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts. The whole earth is full of his glory" (Isaiah 6:3). So David wants the angels to join him in praising the Lord, and I call on the angels this morning. And he expands it in verse 21, "Bless ye the LORD, all ye his hosts; ye ministers of his, that do his pleasure. Bless the LORD, all his works in all places of his dominion." See once you see the wonder and the glory of God you want all creation to join with you in worshipping Him.

But then He comes back as He started. The last expression of the Psalm is "Bless the LORD, O my soul." This is the way that I would like to look at my own present circumstances, and Lucille stands with me in this as do the other members of our family – just rejoicing that we can trust a faithful God to meet our needs and to meet your needs and to use all these circumstances for the honor and the glory and his name.

Let me close with the words of a hymn. I think, though the hymn book I got this out of did not indicate that this was from Psalm 103, I am reasonably sure that the writer of this hymn must have had it in mind. You know it well because we have sung it here often, and yet perhaps we do not notice the words and the message of the hymn until we have occasion to and until we can look at the words apart from the music.

Praise ye the Lord, the Almighty, the King of creation!
O my soul praise Him, for He is thy health and salvation!
All ye who hear, now to His temple draw near,
Join me in glad adoration.

Praise ye the Lord, who o'er all things so wondrously reigneth,
Shelters thee under His wings, yea so gently sustaineth!
Hast thou not seen how thy desires ere have been
Granted in what He ordaineth?

Praise ye the Lord! O let all that is in me adore Him!
All that hath life and breath, come now with praises before Him!
Let the Amen sound from His people again;
Gladly for aye we adore Him.

I really do thank the Lord for the privilege that has been mine to be here and I pray God's richest blessing upon each one of you as the Lord has led in the way that He has. Shall we pray.

Father, we submit to your will joyfully and rejoice that we can trust thee, dear Lord, when we cannot see. Bless each of us here this morning as you know our needs. Above all we pray that you will take continual glory and praise to your most wonderful name. For Jesus sake we pray, Amen.