



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Mark 15:16-21

TRANSCRIPT

Divine Appointment in Human Disappointment – Simon of Cyrene

[Message] For those of you who are here for the first time this morning, I see some who are, the series of studies that we have been undertaking in the ministry of the word hour has been under the general title of “Prominent Figures in the Drama of Golgotha” or “God Unveiled and Man Unmasked.” Today our subject is Simon of Cyrene. And so in order to get the complete picture of this man as he appears in the New Testament, it’s necessary for me to read from three passages in the word. The first, the Gospel of Mark chapter 15 verse 16, Mark 15 verse 16 through verse 21.

“And the soldiers led him away into the hall, called Praetorium; and they call together the whole band. And they clothed him with purple, and platted a crown of thorns, and put it about his head, and began to salute him, Hail, King of the Jews! And they smote him on the head with a reed, and did spit upon him, and bowing their knees worshipped him. (That of course in mockery.) And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple from him, and put his own clothes on him, and led him out to crucify him. And they compel one Simon a Cyrenian, who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to bear his cross.

Now I want you to notice two things in that text, they compelled him and then as he was coming out of the country. Let's turn now to the next of the synoptic gospels, the Gospel of Luke chapter 23 and read beginning with verse 26, Luke chapter 23 and verse 26,

“And as they led him away, they laid hold upon one Simon, a Cyrenian, coming out of the country, and on him they laid the cross, that he might bear it after Jesus. And there followed him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented him. But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bear, and the paps which never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us. For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry? And there were also two other, malefactors, led with him to be put to death.”

One final verse, it's in Paul's letter to the Romans, the last chapter and the 13th verse. The apostle you'll remember is in Corinth, writing to Rome, and he states in the 13th verse, “Salute Rufus, chosen in the Lord.” Now may I translate that again? “Salute Rufus, a choice servant in the Lord or a choice one in the Lord and his mother and mine.” And I want you to notice Rufus, and then the expression, “his mother and mine.” Let's bow together in prayer.

[Prayer] Our gracious God and heavenly Father, we thank Thee for the privilege of listening to the word of God. We thank Thee Lord that this is your word and it comes to us with all of the authority of Heaven. We know Lord that we could not have a more authoritative voice, then the voice of the word of God, that visions or audible voice could never be as authoritative or more authoritative then this voice which Thou has given to

us. Enable us Lord to realize that the word which we hold in our hands contains the message which Thou doest have for us today. We thank Thee for the grace of its preservation and the grace of the illuminating power of the Holy Spirit who is able to through this word; bring us face to face with Thee and with Thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior.

Lord we pray for this audience today and ask Thy blessing upon them as we listen to the authoritative word of God. We pray oh God that you would give each one of us wisdom the wisdom to recognize the preeminence of the divine in our lives. And enable us Lord to realize that the experiences of life are arranged by a sovereign creator. We pray again Lord that Thou would guide us and direct us as a church of Jesus Christ, as an assembly of people who have been called out by the Holy Spirit to meet together and to serve Thee. And we pray oh God that Thou wilt direct us in every step that we take. We desire Lord to be a light in this community, not for our glory, but for the glory of Jesus Christ. Deliver us Lord from any sense of glory in ourselves; enable us to seek first and foremost and always the glory of God and not the praise of men. We pray Lord that Thou wilt lead in to our fellowship those whose hearts have been touched by Thee who definitely know Thee, and who know what it is to be lost and to be saved and who are devoted to him who has made it all possible, Jesus Christ who loved us and loosed us from our sins in his own precious blood.

We thank Thee for the young people who are here today and rejoice Lord in the fact that they are responsive to the word of God. We know Lord that this is the message for youth today, the message of our great leader, Jesus Christ who gives meaning and purpose and vitality to all of our activities. We thank Thee Lord for the others who are here, for the depth of maturity in the lives of so many. And wilt Thou use us too? Oh God we pray that the Lord Jesus may in truth be the head of this assembly and that we may follow him. Enable us to find our place in him and to acknowledge him as head and Lord, and serve him for Thy glory. Lead on oh King eternal, and may this be the prayer

of the hearts of each one of us. Today Lord we pray that this meeting may be a meeting in the center of Thy will for the glory of Jesus Christ in whose name we ask it. Amen.

[Message] Subject for today is Simon of Cyrene or “Divine Appointment in Human Disappointment.” The unexpected things in our lives are often the most practical, and the question that often comes to us in the midst of these very practical things is what will we do with them? For example, you have determined that tonight will be a night in which you enjoy yourself and so you get everything in hand. You go out and get the wood and you set the fire, and you have just kindled the fire. You have some books, if you’re a woman you have some catalogues near at hand, you’re going to sit down in front of the fire and you’re going to look at the catalogues and just imagine the wonderful things that you can purchase and order. Or if you’re a man you have those newspapers that you’ve been wanting to catch up on, and so everything is arranged and you have a cup of coffee and it’s hot and you’re just about ready to drink it and the doorbell rings. And you go to the door and there is Cousin Harry, his wife and seven little children. [Laughter] Now what are you going to do? Or perhaps you have an experience like this, a few years back we invited a couple over for supper, on the appointed day, they didn’t show up. Well we shrugged it off; we just had a little more to eat that night. We were somewhat startled however the next week, the same day to look out just before hamburgers to see them walking up the driveway. [Laughter] The fact that it was their mistake doesn’t really help a whole lot at a time like that.

Someone has said I remember a preacher saying a few years ago, these are the bludgeoning of chance. Simon of Cyrene had such an experience as that. Simon was not a Negro, it has been said that he was a Negro because he was from Cyrene. And furthermore there was a Simeon who was called Niger which means black associated with another man from Cyrene in Acts chapter 13 and verse 1. Now a great deal could be made of this if he were a Negro, compelled to bear the cross of Jesus. What could not we

do with this in the day in which we live? But he was not a Negro; he was most likely a Jew. Now the evidences for the fact that this man was a Jew lie not only in his name which was very Jewish, Simon, but also in where he was and what he was doing. The chances are he was a Hebrew who had come to the city of Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. After all, a Jew outside of the land was never really at home.

A few months back I read an account of Israel in the *National Geographic Magazine*. It was an account written from the standpoint of some who were on a steamer and were coming to the land of Palestine for the first time. And the weeping and the joyous weeping that took place on the ship as they neared the harbor for their first sight of the Promised Land. No Jew was ever happy away from the land of Palestine. And they always looked forward to the time when they could come back from their youth they were given names like Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and they still are, and Simon. And they were told the wonderful stories of the Old Testament so that they thrilled as they thought of the great men of the faith. And then they saved in order to be able to visit home and particularly at one of the great feasts of Israel. Now this is somewhat imaginary, and I want to put you on guard to say that I do not know that this is exactly what transpired in Simon's case. It seems most logical and I think it has persuaded most of the students, and so most likely Simon was a man who lived in our modern day Tripoli, in Libya and he had finally reached the place where he could take a trip to the land which he had heard about so much. And he came and apparently he stayed with someone outside the city, and so that day as he came into the city, he had his life transforming experience.

Now it must be a noteworthy story and this man must be a very significant character because each of the synoptics mention him, and they mention the experience that he had. And when they do, for the Bible student at least, and for the student of the men of the New Testament they lift the curtain on exciting history. Now the first thing that I want you to do with me this morning is to go to the scene of Simon's misfortune

and fortune as Luke records it in his 23rd chapter and let's take a look at the situation as Simon met Jesus Christ. Now in Luke chapter 23, Luke says that when the time came for Jesus to leave the Praetorium and go out to Golgotha to be crucified there, there went out with him a crowd. We read in the 27th verse of Luke chapter 23, “And there followed him a great company of people and women which also bewailed and lamented him.” The road from Jerusalem to Golgotha that Friday morning was crowded, and it is crowded today, and oh that it was crowded today because of real spiritual desire to know our Lord Jesus Christ. But just as today there were crowds in the company of our Lord Jesus on the day in which the feast was to begin that night, but they were not all interested in our Lord Jesus and they were not all interested in knowing him. Some of the people were there because they just were curious they were like dead trees. They had no life in them; they were suffering from the chlorosis of indifference someone has said. And they were kind of carried along by the multitude not because they wanted to know this man but just kind of mildly curious about why the crowd was here.

And today, there are men just like that in the company of our Lord Jesus Christ. To mention the meeting of the saints on Sunday morning and the study of the word of God and the sermon from the servant of God, well it kind of makes them yawn. And in making them yawn, there is an evidence of the fact that judgment has already begun to work, and that it is possible that that judgment which is eternal may soon overtake them. Now I'm not suggesting to you that every preacher is the kind of preacher who excites excitement in those who contemplate hearing him, but I do think that every genuine Christian has a desire to hear God's word. And whenever I run across some Christian, I don't expect a man outside of Christ to have a great desire to hear a sermon, but when I see a man who claims to be a Christian and he has no real interest in the word of God I kind of wonder if the real life is there. There were those like that in the crowd that day.

Then there were others who were interested in religion. After all, the Pharisees and the Sadducees were at hand. And their followers were also at hand, and there were

others who were interested in Judaism and the things that had transpired in recent days. The people were, the crowd was a group of people who had thronged the city in order to partake of the feast of the Passover and to begin the feast that followed the next day. They were men who were interested in religion, but they weren't interested in Jesus Christ they were interested in him only as an object whom they might commit to this great crime. And so there were men who were religious, but they had no heart's relationship to Jesus Christ. If you had come and had spoken to a great number in that crowd that day, and asked them why they were there, they would have given you reasons like this I think. I think there were very few in that crowd who would have said, “This is the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.” Today our churches are crowded with people, this church is by the grace of God and miraculously I must say in auditorium like this crowded with people. I wouldn't be surprised if there were not some here today who were just here because of indifference or interest in spiritual things, interest not in Jesus himself personally.

Then you know, there are people who are kind of interested just in religion just as they're interested in art and politics and even sports. I've run across people like that and so have you. People who will tell you I'm interested in the things of the Bible. The other day I talked to a man who was very interested in archeology, but not interested in Christ. It's good to be interested in both.

And I think there were lots of people that day who were interested in our Lord Jesus for the simple reason that they saw in him a kind of model of human moral greatness and that's as far as their real true spirituality went.

Now the text also mentions women. I'm kind of embarrassed about this, and kind of embarrassed to say it. But did you know that the New Testament never presents any woman as being opposed to the things of the Spirit of God in our Lord Jesus. Never do we have a woman who was opposed to him. That's kind of striking isn't it? Now I'm not going to make any application and say that therefore all women are good. The Bible

doesn't say that, but it is striking nevertheless. I don't want to even comment upon the fact that our churches are filled with women today, and few men. I have a good friend who loves to say, “The church is full of strong women and weak men.” I'm so glad that Believers Chapel is filling up with strong men, men who really want to put Jesus Christ first in their lives. And I hope we have the strong women too, women who are strong spiritually. But the women were there, and the text says that they were bewailing and lamenting him. Now I think the easy way would be for me to say they were the genuine believers but I'm not so sure. Now the reason that I'm not so sure may kind of startle you, and therefore I'm going to say I'm not certain but I just think. I think they were there because they were sentimentally attached to him. They were misguided; we know that, for our Lord rebuked them in just a moment. He says, “Weep not for me daughters of Jerusalem, weep for yourselves and your children.” You don't understand what is happening here.

Now we could make a tremendous application of this, there are lots of people in the church of Jesus Christ today who weep and lament when they hear the old familiar hymns, and when they think about the things that Jesus Christ suffered for us, tears run down their cheeks, but often times that is as deep as it goes, it never really touches the heart. You know, I'm also so glad that in Believers Chapel I've noticed this that whenever we come to the subject of the cross of Jesus Christ there's some big men in the audience, and I begin to notice some tears coming down the cheeks of the men. That's quite an encouragement to a preacher you know. I used to have in the audience constantly a Brannith pilot. He was a very wonderful man, a very tenderhearted man, on the outside, quite the opposite, and he used to come over and sit down on about the second row and I could always tell whether I was preaching under the power of the Spirit or not by just taking a look at the water that was coming out of his eyes. If it was flowing freely, I knew I was doing pretty well, if it wasn't flowing, I really wasn't touching him. But any thing that came, anytime the subject came around to the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ

and what he had done for us, that man, that great hard appearing man, you could just see his eyes well up with tears, you know I've got some in the audience now, and I just love to see them, because it means there are some who have been touched by Jesus Christ and touched in their hearts.

Now I'm thankful that the women were touched, and I don't want to make too much of this, but Jesus Christ does not despise their tears, he does not resent their tears, but he does not need them, and he says he does not need them, he seems to regard this as an evidence of sentimentality only. We know that these are not the women who ministered to him, these are the daughters of Jerusalem, those who ministered to him were the women who had come with him from Galilee, and they were different than these women, they were women of course in whom there was a genuine faith in Jesus Christ and the work could not have progressed without them, they ministered to our Lord in a financial and material way. But these are the daughters of Jerusalem, and Jesus wants to let them know that he is no waif that is broken upon the wheel of fortune, that everything is proceeding according to the plan and purpose of God and it's not necessary to be sorry for him. And it isn't necessary for us as Christians to be sorry for him. He doesn't need our sentimental emotional outbursts of tears. He wants us to understand the fact that he is in control of his destiny. And yet at the same time to realize that it is his love that enables him to do what he is doing.

Well this is the scene, now let's take a look at Simon himself as he meets this crowd, and meets with fate, and meets with divine favor. There are really three acts in the life of Simon. Act one is Golgotha. In Mark chapter 15 and verse 21 is our text. I said it was early Friday morning, there was a great commotion on the way out to Golgotha, it was a commotion of a very disorderly procession. There were yapping Jews who were yapping at our Lord's feet, they were of course accusing him of blasphemy and tormenting him because of that, there were hard coarse Roman soldiers, cruelly carrying out their duty, and then the weeping women and I think also off in the shadows a few

dismayed followers of the Lord Jesus who were wondering really what was happening. And then there was the pathetically weakening Savior of the world. Tradition says that just as Simon came on the scene, Jesus stumbled. He was a Cyrenian, coming out of the country.

Now I don't know why he was out in the country, I rather think that that's where he was staying, because the feast was a time in which Jerusalem was crowded, and so that was his home, outside the city during the feast, and early in the morning he had come in. Perhaps he was just taking a morning walk to look over the city which had meant so much to him for so many years. At any rate, he saw the procession, apparently he made no effort to become a part of it, but as it passed by, the procession and Simon met. And if our Lord Jesus Christ stumbled, and was just about to fall because of the fact that during the night he had not had a chance to sleep, he had been subjected to all of the Roman and Jewish abuse and he was weakened physically, just at that point, a Roman soldier, seeing that he was just about to fall with the cross which it was their duty to carry, came upon Simon and a spear he felt upon his shoulder. Now Simon turned around, and apparently from Mark's text, he says “and they compelled one Simon” he was not very happy about this. He already had his plans and purposes for that morning. Perhaps he was going to take the historical tour of the city, or perhaps he had some friends that he wanted to look up, members of the family that he had never seen.

At any rate, this was an unwanted intrusion in the life of Simon, and you can see him resisting. But the Romans had authority of course to requisition, that word that is used there is a interesting word, it is found in the New Testament about twice as I remember and in ancient days, it was used of the Persians or it came from a Persian word which referred to requisitioning. The Persians had a great postal system it was the model of the ancient world, they had it arranged very much like in the west with the pony stages and the postal system that we had in the west many years ago. The postal system was arranged in stages so that the postal servant the postman road a horse for a certain length

of time, he got off the horse at the appointed place, and the people were responsible to have at that place, food an provision and fodder and fresh horses. And if they were not there, the man in charge had authority to requisition these things from the people. And so this word came to have the force of requisitioning. And here is the Roman press gang and the spear taps Simon on the shoulder and he knows deep down in his heart that he must obey, but he objects, he remonstrates, he expostulates and finally the Roman soldier says, “Look here buddy, if you don’t do what we say, you’re going to find yourself in the clink in just a few hours, and furthermore, we don’t feed you Passover lamb in our paddies and you can be sure that you’re going to have it kind of bad.” And so Simon, against his wishes now, is compelled to take up the cross of the Lord Jesus. He doesn’t know anything about Jesus apparently. And so he trudges along with the cross behind the son of God.

Have you ever gotten up in the morning, and you’ve gone out and you’ve gotten on the freeway, and you’ve been going along thinking about the business of the day and you miss your turn off, and for the rest of the day, you take it our on your secretary and on the people at the office and on the people that you meet during the day. Everything is gone wrong. There was an old fight manager who used to say about his fighters when they lost a fight, he used to say about them, they should have stood in bed. That was his past tense for stay, they should have stood in bed that day, everything went bad. You know we say we got up on the wrong side of the bed. Well that’s the way Simon felt, he was just fuming over the fact that here he was having to take part in this procession when he had all of those things that he had planned to do. But you see it is in these things often that God comes to us.

Now the text goes on to say “and they led” in Luke chapter 23 and verse 28, the text goes on to say about this time, as the women were bewailing and lamenting, Jesus turned unto them and said, “Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children.” And Simon I’m sure was utterly astounded. Why here

was a man which he had thought was simply a Jewish blasphemer, a weak person who probably and I'm sure he felt this way now, deservedly should have been crucified. And Jesus as he turns about to speak to the women who are coming, Simon looks upon this face of our Lord Jesus and I think he must have gazed rapt into a countenance such as he had never seen in all of his life. It was the noblest face that Simon had ever seen. There was tenderness there amidst the majesty of the person of the Son of God. And I think that Simon must have been fascinated by the dignity and the humility of the Lord Jesus Christ. And then he heard these strange words which seemed so contrary to the situation, “Daughters of Jerusalem, don't weep for me this common Jewish underling who seemed to him to be a worthy subject to be the Roman death of crucifixion now speaks with a nobility and an authority and an insight who utterly astounds this man who has been thinking about the great Passover lamb of Israel and all that that service meant. And I think from that moment on, though Simon may not have realized it, his was a captured heart.

But we do not know what happened. Simon I presume went out to Golgotha looked at our Lord Jesus as he hung between the two thieves, heard the centurion make his statement, “truly this was the Son of God.” Heard him utter that cry, “My God my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?” Wondered at what it all meant, finally heard him say, “Father into Thy hands I commit my spirit,” act one, Golgotha.

Act two, is Pentecost. Now I want you to take your Bibles, and turn with me to Acts chapter 2 and verse 10. Seven weeks have passed, Simons visit is almost over, he's heard a great deal in the meantime. He's heard about the life of this man of God. There's been a lot of discussion of Jesus, he's heard about his works, he no doubt has heard about the miracles that he performed, in particularly, the resurrection of Lazarus, and it's just possible that Simon has even taken a glance or two at Lazarus and wondered at what it all meant. He's heard about his teaching, and even his enemies acknowledge that out of this man's lips surely did flow gracious words. But most of all, Simon has heard that

the body was missing from the tomb. And he also has noticed that the Jews have adopted a hush hush policy with regard to the Lord Jesus. They have tried to lay their hands upon men to lie, and they have been caught in their lies. And so Simon now is greatly troubled.

Now there's another unorthodox crowd at the temple this morning, the day of Pentecost, he goes out; he notices there's a lot of milling about. There seems to be an aura of sensationalism about it. He goes up and says, “What's happening out here?” And someone turns to him and says, “Some Galileans are speaking in other tongues.” “Speaking in other tongues?” “Yes, look off at that fisherman over there, we've already heard him speak in three or four tongues, and he doesn't have as much sense as we have.” And so Simon edges closer. Now I think that Simon is there because the 10th verse says that there were there people from many places in Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene,” that's Simon's home. I'm not sure, I cannot be sure; I'm just assuming he's there. At any rate, I know he came to faith, and so he listens. And somebody says, “Ah these fellows have just had too much to drink today, that sixty-nine was too much for them. Some of them are tipsy, they've been drinking new wine, they ought to know better. Someone else says, yes but it's early in the morning, this isn't the time to drink. And about this time, Peter stands up and he begins to speak and he says, “Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words.” And then Peter begins to preach and oh how he preached.

William Ward Aire was visiting at Dallas Seminary for the Griffith Thomas lectures in the fall, and he spoke about a man who said that his minister was invisible during the week and incomprehensible on Sunday morning. Well I want assure you that Peter was not a man who was incomprehensible, he was very much to the point. One of the bishops of Oxford said once to a young man who ask him how to preach, he said, “Preach about God and preach about twenty minutes.” And I don't think that Peter

observed the second, and I'm not sure really that he observed the first, because his message was the crucified Son of God.

And finally, he reached his dramatic conclusion and he said, “Therefore, let all the house of Israel (and Simon was among them) know assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus whom ye have crucified both Lord Jehovah and Messiah.” And there was a breathless silence. And suddenly, the crowd gave the invitation. “Oh preacher, oh preacher, it was the Spirit of God.” And so we read, “Men, brethren, what shall we do?” And Peter spoke, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the LORD our God shall call. And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, save yourselves from this untoward generation. Then they that gladly received his word”

And Simon was saved.

Act three, the scene is not recorded in the Bible; the scene is Libya if he was still living there. Bishop Taylor Smith, one of the great saints of a couple of generations ago, I think at one time he was chaplain of the British army, most famous because he used to have a little test for every chaplain. The test was simply this; you have three minutes to speak to a dying man, what will you say to him? And if that man did not come through with the gospel, the bishop would not allow them to be a chaplain. The chaplain once said, “Many Christians are like rivers that flow into the arctic, frozen at the mouth.” Simon was not such a Christian. He went back, he gathered his family together, I mention this, this happened when a couple of years ago I was in Tennessee and during the midst of some meetings over there a little boy was saved, was just about five years old. And when he was saved, do you know what the first thing was that he said? He went to his mother and he said, “Mama I've been saved.” He knew she was saved. “Mama I've been saved,

is dad saved?” So Simon went back, he gathered his family around him, his wife and his sons, Alexander and Rufus. And there they were, and he told them the strangest story that a pilgrim ever told who had come from Jerusalem.

Well when Mark writes his gospel, the sons are in Rome, he says that Simon was the father of Alexander and Rufus. Mark’s gospel was written to Rome. It was written sometime after this. The children have now come to Rome, apparently they are so well known in the church at Rome among the Christians there that Mark wants them to realize that the father of these two outstanding Christians in the city of Rome was the one who carried the cross of Jesus, the father of Alexander and Rufus. Tradition is that Alexander was martyred as a missionary. And of course, Paul’s statement in the 16th of Romans says that Rufus was a choice saint in the Lord. And furthermore he says as he wrote to Rome, “Greet Rufus, a choice servant in the Lord and his mother and mine.” And so Simon’s wife not only found the Lord as her Savior, but also became a securer of the Apostle Paul himself. Where this happened, we don’t know. And so here is a man who met with destiny one day, and it left its mark upon him forever.

What is the signification of Simon’s experience? Well first of all, I think it’s obvious, that in Simon’s life, we see the benediction of the accidents of providence. A strange mingling of chance and fate if we looked at it from the human side. But out of this most disappointing experience to Simon, came the divine blessing. Simon was frustrated, that led to illumination, and finally to salvation. And Simon’s name goes sounding along with the name of the crucified to the end of time. The only man who ever carried the cross of Jesus Christ literally, Simon of Cyrene.

The second lesson is a lesson for Christians. I think we have here a tremendous illustration of the method for meeting the dilemmas of life. There are three ways you know, you can resist and be tormented by bitterness. It’s amazing how people resist life. I was reading in the newspaper the other day about seatbelts and the response that has been made to them. It’s kind of interesting, did you know that only from four to twenty-

six percent of the people who have seatbelts ever put them on and wear them. They have all kinds of reasons too, rationalizations. One man said he's been thrown out of his car three times in total wrecks and he lived. He wouldn't dare put on any seatbelts. [Laughter] He said if he'd had his seatbelts around him he wouldn't be here to tell about it. And then there are pregnant women who wonder well what's going to happen to the baby in an accident? They won't wear them.

And then there is just plain rebellion, there was a man who bought a car and the first thing he did is he drove it home and he got a pair of scissors and clipped the seatbelts off, first thing he did. But the height of rebellion and I'm not trying to rub it in ladies, we have the loveliest ladies in all the world in Believers Chapel, I really mean that, I've often said to my wife that we have the loveliest people in this chapel of any church that I've ever been associated with. But anyway, one woman, you know what she did? She had a thunderbird, and this thunderbird had a little red signal that said “seatbelts not fastened” and it stayed on until you fastened them. She couldn't stand it. She finally took off her shoe took the spike and knocked that light out. [Laughter] Now since that time by the way, I understand, that thunderbirds, after ten seconds, the light goes off and stays off now. Sometimes we just resist life and the result is that we are bitter, and you've seen Christians like that, they're very bitter, they've resisted the things that have come into their lives. And in resisting, they've lost the blessing that God wants for them.

Then there's the other kind of person who just surrenders. He's torn apart by self pity and despair. I know some men like that. They've lost in the battle of the sexes and they've just surrendered and now they're going around with a hangdog look on their faces and you know them too. And then there are some women who have surrendered too. We had one in the audience last Sunday morning. She lived for many years in surrender. It was a hell on earth. And now there is a glow about her because freedom has come. She never knew how apparently to wrestle with the facts of life before.

So we can resist, and bitterness follows, or we can surrender and self pity and despair comes. Or thirdly, we can seek God's will. Now you know how I feel about psychiatry and psychology. I'm not going to say and I don't think I ever had said if so I'll correct it, that I do not think there is anything good in psychiatry or psychology. I'm merely saying that in my own experience, most of the good that comes from the ministrations of psychologists and psychiatrists may be found in the word of God.

Just recently I was reading Paul Tournier's book, *To Resist or to Surrender*, I was kind of interested in what he had to say, because he said the same thing the Bible says. He says, “To resist or to surrender, these are two alternatives which do not do us any good, there is only a third alternative that really works and that is to find God's will. I say about Mr. Tournier, he has some wonderful examples in his books, but I think that everything that is good that is found in him is found in God's word, and everything that is not found in God's word which is in Mr. Tournier is probably suspect. And so, finding God's will, that's really the answer. In the dilemmas of life, resistance doesn't help, surrender doesn't help, but the finding of God's will is the answer.

I heard of a preacher once who received a call to another church. He had told his congregation he was going to pray about it. Someone was very much disturbed over it, called on the preacher during the week. The little boy opened the door, the member said, “Is your father in?” “Yes, he's in, he's in the study praying, and Mama's upstairs packing.” Now Christians, it seems to me that this is the way we face the dilemmas of life. We make up our minds, we'll either resist, or we'll surrender, but we do not make any effort to see God's will.

I heard Pastor Steadman of Peninsula Bible Church once say that “We either break out in bitterness or we break down with a sick headache or we break through to find God's will.” A wonderful illustration in Simon's case, God laid his hand upon Simon, and that man was forced into the will of God. I've often thought that that's the way God deals with me.

And then thirdly, and our time is about up, I think that there is a moment like Simon's in every man's life. For some, it's a quiet call that comes when you're a youngster. In another it may come through some arresting words that someone has spoken. Or it may come through the accident of providence some burden that you must bear that you had not anticipated bearing, some tragedy that has come into your life that you could never had anticipated, some perplexity that fazes you, and that's the moment when finally you look full into the face of Jesus Christ and everything depends upon how you respond. Simon responded, there is no glory in response. We learn from God's word that we respond because he had brought us to the place of response.

Twenty-five years ago I was in the insurance business. It's this month if may be privileged to give you a personal testimony upon my twenty-fifth anniversary. It was this month, twenty-six years ago, I'm sorry. I was asked to go to a meeting, a tea. Now I didn't go to teas in the first place, but this one with a preacher. But nevertheless, I was persuaded. I thought this was harmless, and after all, he was beginning a series of meetings this week, and if I could go to the tea and escape the meetings then everything would be wonderful. And so I went to the tea. We were in a discussion; I had objected to the Bible as the word of God and wouldn't listen to it because I didn't think it was the word of God. And finally I spoke to this man and said, "How can we know that the Bible is the word of God and he gave me a couple of simple illustrations and said you see if the Bible had been written as a forgery, it never would have had upon it's face apparent contradictions which everyone can see.

Well that's not a very wise solution to the problem, but at least it showed me that I hadn't thought a great deal about the matter. I arose about six o'clock, and I was planning on going home, and as we were out in the hall, the preacher turned around and said, "Who's taking me to church tonight," and my wife said, "We will." [Laughter] Now I was very very much frustrated over this, I think I felt exactly like Simon did, I had been requisitioned. I had been commandeered. And I went, and for the first time in my life I

heard someone speak with authority about Jesus Christ. But I didn't want to admit that I was touched. And so the next day proceeded according to schedule and I think that Mary did not really have the faith to believe that the word of God could touch a heart as hard as mine, and so the next night she went to the meeting by herself and I sat with Sam, the baby.

And when she came home I asked her a lot of questions and finally, the next morning as I got up to go to work, in those days I used to work, [Laughter] as I got up the next morning to work, I told Mary, just blurted it out, I couldn't help it I said, “you've got to get a babysitter for every night this week, I'm going to hear everyone of those messages.” That week I came face to face with Jesus Christ and was saved. God saved me. That moment comes in the life of every man. Have you ever been brought face to face with Jesus Christ who loved you and gave himself for you took away our sins and now he extends the free gift of everlasting life to all who will simply say, “I thank Thee Lord for giving Jesus Christ to die for me, I take him as my personal Savior.” As simple as that, and life becomes exciting and meaningful and glorious and never ends. May God speak to your heart for Jesus' sake. Shall we stand for the benediction?

[Prayer] Now unto him who is able to guard us from stumbling and to present us faultless before the presence of his glory, with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour through Jesus Christ be glory, majesty, dominion and power. And oh Father in the accidents of providence, give us hearts to respond and seek Thy will. For Jesus' sake. Amen.