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SUMMARY KEYWORDS

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00:06

A couple of places. And if you have a Bible and would like to turn with us, the first one is from the fifth chapter of the book of Matthew. We'll kind of get both of these maybe together before we read them. Matthew five. And the second one is from First Corinthians one. Matthew five, in First Corinthians one.

00:42

We're going to begin reading at verse 33. of Matthew five. Jesus is speaking. Again, you have heard that it was said to the men of old, you shall not swear falsely, but shall perform to the Lord, like you have sworn. But I say to you, do not swear at all, either by heaven, or it is the throne of God, or by the Earth, or it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, or it is the city of the great king. And do not swear but your head, or you cannot make one hair wider blind. Now, listen to the next line. Let what you say, be simply, yes or no. Anything more than this comes from evil. That's astonishing. Let what you say be simply yes or no. Anything more than this comes from evil. Now let's turn to First Corinthians. And again at verse 18. For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved, it is the power of God or it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the cleverness of the clever I will throw it. Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Is not God made foolish the wisdom of the world for sin, and the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it please God through the folly of what we preach, to save those who believe. Or Jews demand signs, and Greeks seek wisdom. But we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews, folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called both Jews and Greek, Christ, the power of God, and the wisdom of God, or the foolishness of God is wiser than men. And the weakness of God is stronger than that us.

03:38

Our Father, we want to know how to say mentally, yes, and no. But we face so many contradictions and so many alternative options. And it's also confusing that sometimes we've despair of ever being able to find truth that is deep enough and real enough simply to say yes to

04:27

we recognize that if we could find such truth then it could give us so so much stability. So much

certainty. So much confidence. If we could find it we we just know that we could be strong and courageous.

04:56

And so we're asking tonight that We can see it. We've tried our own way. Now help us to consider your way. And grant oh Father, each one of us a lot of wisdom and understanding.

05:18

So that we'll be able to hear, discriminating way. Your words, we ask these things in Jesus name, Amen. Now, tonight we're looking at the matter of decisions. Or really how to say yes and no. Because that's what the season boils down to. It's a matter of saying yes to certain things. And it's a matter of saying no to other things. And we are the only creatures who can really say that. We're the only ones who can really say yes and no. Because we, we have been endowed with the image of God, which enables us to make choices, simply out of our freedom, God is free. And since God is free, and we are made in His image, it follows that we are free, we're free to say yes and no. And it was a great risk really involved, for God to create persons. Especially when he did not pre programmed the person so that he could do nothing but love him. To create persons of choice is risky business. Every time a child is born into a family, it is born as, as a free person. And every parent knows that there's always the possibility that the child one day may look them squarely in the eye and say no. And just reject them completely. But then that's the only way that real love operates. That's the nature of love. And I suppose it wouldn't be love. If it wasn't free. If it didn't have the power to say yes or no, we would all be a Tom automatons. We will be robots. We would, we would be pre programmed like the rabbit, or the fox or the bird or the fish. But we are we are we are persons. And that's what we're really struggling with is what that means. And sometimes we wish we learned. I know a lot of people that wish they weren't persons and they ask all the time. Well, why were we made this way? You see, that's really a struggle with our own nature. No, nothing else that's created asked questions like that, but we do. Because maybe, or maybe it's because or part of the reason may be that we don't like to make decisions, and then bear the responsibility for those decisions. And yet, that's, that's almost contradictory, or at least paradoxical because a kid just can't wait to get old enough to make his own decisions. You know, and he goes through a period in his life in which he says, I want to decide some of these things, I want to determine what I do. And I want to determine where I go. And I want to determine how my hair looks. And I want to determine what I wear. And I want to determine who my friends are and ad infinitum. I want to make these decisions. But then pretty soon, when the weight of decision making falls upon us, and the subsequent responsibility for those decisions, then it becomes a more difficult proposition. And we find ourselves wrestling and struggling with that. And when we say why did God make us so that we could be disobedient or so that we could do evil? You see, we are rarely saying I do not want to live with my own decisions. I don't want to live with my own choices. I don't want that responsibility. I would like to have the freedom of doing anything i Please without bearing any responsibility. But there is no such thing as decisions made in freedom that do not carry responsibility. The very nature of decision itself inherently carries the idea of responsibility. Freedom is never free in the sense that it is irresponsible. The moment that that the free person becomes an error sponsible person, he is no longer a free person, he's in bondage. And he brings others in bondage. Maybe out of that, just to lay a really heavy went on, is the paradox, perhaps the greatest paradox and the teachings of Jesus, which says that the greatest freedom is the greatest slavery. And it's only when a person is is half committed, that he is past free. The only really free person, the only totally free person is the person who is totally committed. Then all of this, the schism and the tension that set up on the inside that set up in the mind and the heart, all of this is gone.

Once the human being finds something, to go all out for to be all out for once he finds a place to stand, once he finds an orientation for his life that enables him to say yes to the things he should say yes to, and no to the things he should say no to, and be able to live with the following responsibility and consequences. And that's what we've really come together tonight to discuss, how does a person say yes and no. Now the second fancies that we read, give, what I believe the Bible teaches is the basis and the only base upon which human beings can say yes and no, and not having to go beyond and fall into what Jesus called evil. And he says, that, that this wisdom, this crawl, he says, is the wisdom of God. And it is the power of God. Now, let's put a couple of other groups over here. He says, on the basis of the cross, there are some people who say, it is totally he says, that's true. Then he says, there is another group, who does not say it is foolish, but who say really, that it's in the call, that there is truth. It's in the cross, that there is power. And he says, this group is the same. And therefore, really, we're all pretty well, section down here tonight, this fancy, really divides all of it into a couple of groups. God says there is one group of perishing group and another group that the faith group, and the difference between the perishing and the save is the way we look at and respond to the cross. Now, that's very arbitrary, isn't it? And you almost, we almost do not want to live with that kind of definiteness. Our age of relativity will hardly give us any room at all, for for definiteness. For absoluteness, for confidence, and for certain things. We have bred a kind of mental atmosphere in this nation, that that produces sloppy thinking, and sloppy, sloppy and sloppy values, and sloppy morals and sloppy love and slump a family style. This could be described maybe as the age of man's greatest genius, but it could also as easily be described as the age of man's greatest sloppiness. Almost nobody knows anything. No one knows anything for certain no one knows where he he is no one really knows where he's headed. No one speaks with real conviction. No one seems to know anything. And we're always reacting. And the direction of our life is is really formed by all the things we react to and it started when we were still at home. We reacted to our parents and some of us wound up with a whole different personality, simply because of that constant tension with parents. We became rebellious, we became obstinate, we became powders.

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We developed a kind of emotional and mental attitude that is objectionable. That is not pleasing, that is not loving. We develop irritability, we develop selfishness, we wanted to go our own way, simply because we reacted to the authority of parents. And then you go to school, and we react to that. And you go to college, and you react to that. And you react to to the older people, you react to the young people, and we're always reacting. And the direction that we're going and the things we believe, are born every action they are, they do not emerge from honest, intelligent human beings, who will sit down and keep quiet long enough to ask some deep, probing questions about life. And to think through and to find some answers, and to test the answer, so that we can come away with some wisdom calm, we can come away with some confidence, some common sense, certain things. And we have in the silence of our own hearts and lives, we have found the way that we ought to live. This, there's a great verse in the book of Psalms that says, Be still and know that I am God. And so there is a tremendous need today for for us to sit down and to think through some things now, the Bible that has stood for 2000 years. That that makes the claim of being the Word of God, the maker of man is being rejected today, out of reaction. I don't really find very many people who put down the Bible, who know very much about the Bible.

17:35

Most of its critics know the least about. And that's never made very much sense, really. And it's almost as if we're afraid to really read

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that somehow, as long as we can stand back away from it and put it down. And as long as we can stand away, and keep ourselves convinced that it's foolish, that it's silly, but it's medieval, that it's a museum fee, then we never have to turn a single page and read a word. We're free. And yet, if we did any other book on Earth nearly that way, people would say, well, you're immature, you're not well around it, you're not, you're not really an honor. pursuer of. The Bible is one book, that intelligent people have thoroughly convinced themselves, that they need to have no knowledge of it whatsoever. And yet, they know when they think about it, that no book has influenced the entire history of the West, quite to the degree that the Bible has. And so again, from the standpoint simply of knowing about my own hair, I owe it to myself, to know something about the Bible. And then when I think beyond that, it seems like automate even a little bit curious. Because there's not a book in the world. That against which there has been a more concerted effort century after century after century to destroy. And yet everyone who's ever thrown a stone at it, everyone who's ever thrown a copy in the fire, everyone who's ever spoken against it, all die. Their words vanish in the air with their death in the Bible keeps your eye on lips. I would just be curious about the book. Now with that kind of open In the night, the Bible really says that the history of man has at its fork, a curl, that the cross is the fork in the road, that the cross is the fork in the road. And people who take one road are foolish, and our parents, and people who take the other road have power and our sake,

20:27

isn't that blunt, blunt. So that you know, whether you're fooling or power all on the basis of how you view the crop.

20:42

Now, I don't know if there's a person here who would accept that or not yet. That just almost too far removed from from the way we're accustomed to thinking. But let's just grant that maybe that's the truth. If you can't come all the way with us tonight, just for the sake of this one, one period of time in your life, just kind of grant that it's right. And let's see what he's really saying. Now, he comes along, and he says that the crawl is the wisdom of God. It's the wisdom of God. How in the world could a crawl on which a man died? The wisdom? It Bessie, is that a statement of a raving maniac? How can it be wisdom? He says that the cross is the power of God, how can a cross on which a man is die? The power? You know, if I wrote the word death right here we're looking at we're looking at it purely from common sense right now. If I wrote the word that right there, how much does the sum total of man's wisdom about that amount?

22:22

That is what nobody is a veteran. It's like the it's like the, the young man who came back and visited the mother of the buddy that died on the field. And she said, How did he die? And the voice of like an image

22:50

there are no professionals. When it comes to death we're all amateurs. Because we don't have any way to deal with it. We have no idea when we have to take a fatalistic view, it's gonna get us and there's nothing we can do about it. I've set with scores now dying. Think someday we're fighting it every step of the way. But it's not on anyhow. I've seen others die with a smile. It got them to. Nobody is very smart. Around the body of a dying person. It just takes it all out

23:51

in depth, we have no power. Ever every power symbol that's known to man is weakness. In the presence of death. One of the people that I was with a moment of his death was wealthy and power.

24:10

And his well. It bought him a hospital suite. It bought him a phone search. But it didn't stay there. He was a man who spoke and other men jumped.

24:37

And he cried out, he resisted. But death wouldn't listen to him. He had no power at all over. And so when the Bible comes along against that kind of history, against that kind of evidence against that kind of How about a situation? Given the genius and the brilliance of man? It makes me jerked my head. When God says, at the cloud, the death of Jesus is the wisdom and the power of God.

25:27

It just makes you stop. And take notice. Now we ask, in what way is the cross, the wisdom and the power of God.

25:44

And let's move now to the cross for a few moments. And just look again at what the situation is. And tonight, we might want to say this by way of explanation. When describing what happened that Jesus did, we're trying to look at the meaning. That the only sermons I ever heard about the crucifixion of Christ, were sermons that just painted word pictures, that so I could see some blood dripping, and I could hear the moaning, and the groaning and all of that, and it all has its place. But it was a long time before anybody ever told me What's crossmen. And tonight, we're going to try to look at that question. What is the cross me? What does it mean in terms of, of the life of a human being? What happened? What happened that day, that made us decide that the wisdom and the power of God a lot of men have died on a crawl? What is it that made this particular man sat on across wisdom and power? Well, this particular man that makes a little bit a lot of times people in in asking and wondering about miracles, and signs, wonders, and all these things, will ask, you know, what is so distinctive about Jesus? Didn't other people commit, perform miracles? Well, then other people were

another people, great teachers. Yes. Well, did he have other people died for others? And have there been other resurrections? Yes. Then what makes him so special? Because in Second Corinthians five, to when that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself.

27:59

That's what makes the difference. The Bible teaches that No, Jesus Christ, God was present. Jesus said, When you have seen me, you have seen the Father in no other man,

28:15

as that claim ever been made. Only Jesus is God living. And it's God working to do what? To reconcile, man to bring about peace, who forgive the man who loves the man. All of that is involved in what was what happened at the cross. Only in Jesus Christ, only in his miracles and only in his death, and only in his resurrection, was God present dealing with you and me, making the difference between the perishing and the sage. It claims to be a mighty act, the monumental act that was going on in that cross. So we go to it, and we try to figure it out. And when we sad and I'd like for us now for a moment just to kind of go to the cross and stand there. And I'd like for us to act as we go and stand there. What is there in this world? That is the strongest thing that man can know. And light hold on. That's the question I want us to ask. Because that's what we need. Listen, we We need a strong arm. today. We need streets. We need the kind of strength that can visit us in the interior of our lives. And that can make us strong. There are lots of pressures. And there are lots of anxieties and everything indicates that more are on the way. And human being as a human being, as a human being is getting wiped down, he's getting trampled over, he's getting run down, he's getting beat, he's getting, he's getting beat down. And we've got more and more people who who are who are just giving up and more and more people who are living in complete apathy. And who are who are totally uninvolved, we've got more and more people who are just stepping out and saying no to the whole business, and who are just waiting for the moment in which they're going to make their way and hoping that somehow if anybody survives, they will make, we've given up believing that we have the right to decide and that we can decide. And so we're asking here, what is it? That's the strongest thing? Or what is it? That's the deepest thing that could form a solid foundation on which a man can base his life? Or what is it that we can trust? What is it that we can trust that will never be wiped down?

31:34

That will never be destroyed. If I can't have a place to stand, that is not subject to the destruction of all the things that are around me. Then, of course, I'll be destroyed with all the things that are around, I need a place to put my feet that time and change will never destroy.

32:03

I need a place to stand a place to be I need a place that strong. What can a person trust? That's the question. All right, first of all, and the person Press Well, it's even begin before that. Can a person trust just the natural world? The earth? No, some you hear people saying a lot of times, you know, what I want to do is just put my feet down as good Oh, solid earth, you know, and somehow I feel like I can make? Well, that sounds pretty good until an earthquake. And I don't know if you've ever

experienced an earthquake or not. I never experience a big one. But I've experienced a little big one. Everybody said it was little but it was pretty big to me. shook me up pretty fast. And I remember, I don't know how many have seen a really big meteor shower. But one morning I had arisen about four o'clock. And unfortunately I didn't even know there were supposed to be one. Everybody else was trying to see it. And I didn't even know it was supposed to be and I was in the middle of it. But I was driving along it was still dark and driving out there was Northeast Arkansas and pretty soon, you know, they want to streak and then their winning streak and their win streak and they want to straight and it was a streak streak streak streak. And you know, one or two or three or four is not bad. But you know when when 50 stars streak, you know, and then 100 st it gets freaky pretty fast. And so it looked to me like whole sky was just falling out.

34:06

And you even wonder at moments like that if one might be aimed at you. So I kind of pulled over to the side of the road and I thought I'd get out investigate that thing a little bit. And a truck driver pulled up. And he stopped and he crawled down that track, he said

34:33

and he jumps and swallows What do you get? What's happening? And I said well, I guess it's a meteor shower.

34:45

But I really think that that is Gabriel is blowing the horn that oh boy wouldn't have been a bit surprised. And I really don't know if I'd have been very surprised later.

34:57

You know, we think that this whole world is free. We follow it until we're reminded, through just natural calamity of an earthquake that can just in a matter of moments, wiped out balance, balance 1000s 1000s of people

35:20

maybe near us is is, is you stood, and you've seen where we're a little tiny funnel,

35:26

that's just and nothing, just the enormity of its power. And then you then you remember that, that really the world

35:42

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is that there's a little tiny spot and an enormous universe. And that in all the universe, the miles and the millions and the billions and trillions of miles that are out there, that there's only one little tiny, then band around one little tiny planet called Earth that will support human life, at least that we know of at this point. And we know that if one of these little human beings, if it goes just a few miles in that direction, he just dies. He can't live. And if he goes just a little bit under the skin, down into the earth, again, he makes the gaseous influences that do not enable him to live. We are all on a tiny, gradual ban on the skin of the small planet Earth. And as the thing shakes in either direction, we've all had it. The place for a man lives is an extremely fragile place. And frankly, it helps me to know that the person who's supporting all of that loves me. Because he could just come in and just squeeze that over just a little bit. And then we've had it. But he likes us. We learned that right here. We say the world is so it's so stable that when you wish you had stood there that day. And even if you'd been disappointed if you had said, Well, you know, I had hoped that Jesus was really, but you know all now. There he is. He's dying. And so I guess I'll just put my feet down. That's good, oh, solid Burma. And about that time, the Bible says that, when Jesus died, the earth began to shake. And the rocks and the hills around Jerusalem began to tremble. And it's as though rocks and hills said to us, dear man, you can't trust me

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the person looks around me thinks well, what else can I dress? And then he thinks, Well, maybe maybe I can trust religion. You know, just be religious. That's the thing now just be religious. While we're at the Maurice Hill, and he said, I perceive in all things, you're too superstitious, that fast buying the hills, your all your devotions, I passed an offer with inscription, to the unknown God, whom therefore you ignorantly worship him declare I unto you. Here it was a was a whole civilization and particularly a whole body of people that Paul perceive were very, very religious. But he says you are ignorant of the one thing that could save you. That's the message he said that he'd come to bring. A person says ologists trust religion, and then it begins to look around for for the most stable religion that he could find. And during that day, it would have been Judaism. And the temple that had stood for centuries. As he looks at it, decided that he's going to trust the people. He's going to trust religion. He's simply going to trust the institutions of religion. Then the veil in the temple is rent and Twain. It's torn apart. It's as though the institutions of religion say you can't trust us. simply being religious is not enough. So the guy is getting confused. And he says, Well, okay, so I can't trust the world. And that is the material order of things and, and I can't trust simply a religion that's, that's there and it's been there for a long while. I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll just go inside. And I'll just trust myself. I'll just go my own way. And as it goes into his own head, he trusts himself to find his own way. He happens to remember he looks up, and he sees the one who's dying. And remember, that's the best man by any man standard to ever live. He's getting in the neck. You can't even trust yourself.

41:00

He says, Oh, well. I guess maybe those things don't mean anything. And after all, we're going to all die anyway. And so really, what makes the difference?

41:18

I'll just, I'll just trust this. We're all going to be wiped down. And about the time he thought, I'll just trust them.

41:30

At least this will provide an escape at least that will provide a hiding place than people who had slept in grey appeared in Jerusalem. Even death can't be trusted. So unsafe

42:03

what can you trust? What's the deepest? What's the strongest thing and you look up again. Maybe you hear a faint mumble as that emaciated figure on the Cross says, and you move close to hearing, Father, forgive them. For they know not what they did for forgive.

42:51

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. Or for Romans five, But God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for the ungodly. To wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself. What is the what is what's left? The world religion, now that none of these can fully be trusted, whatsoever. And finally, is the man stands there his eyes wander back to the cross. And it begins to comprehend the mystery that is there. Now I'd like to read a passage. I want you to just to listen to this, don't try to follow just listen to

44:03

what shall we say to this? If God is for us, who's against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but gave him up for us all. Will he not also give us all things within? Who shall bring in a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies who is to condemn?

44:40

Is it Christ Jesus who died? Yes, who was raised from the dead, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us. Here's the key. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, no. distress, persecution, famine nakedness peril, or sword. Know in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him the landless people, people more than conquerors. People more than conquerors in tribulation, in distress, in persecution, and famine in nakedness and peril and sword I may be naked but I'm cover. I may be hungry but I'm closer. No in all these things we are more than conquerors through love. Where I am sure that neither dad