

BACCALAUREATE ADDRESS

"A CALL TO COMMITMENT"
ROMANS 12:1-21

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It is not just for graduates today -- it is for each one of us because all of their hopes are our hopes -- all of their dreams are our dreams -- all of their problems are our problems. The world that they face in this next transition in their lives is a world that we put together for them to inherit - good, bad or indifferent or in combination of all of the above.

I know when we come to a Baccalaureate service and graduates are going through all of the riggermarole and the ritual that goes along with graduation and you have a Baccalaureate sermon what you are all hoping for in their hearts is - "Pastor Walker keep it short." And the truth is -- all of you who do not have on graduation costumes, you are hoping the same thing. Some of you have already moved into your long-winded positions. In fact, some of you have never gotten out of them - you have been napping through the whole thing. Look over at your neighbor and say - "Wake up whether you feel like it or not." That will help you -- fine.

STORY

My father used to tell the story of the man who was preaching in the place and he just preached and preached and it looked like he never would quit.

At the close of his sermon the pastor wanted to take up a special offering that was very important for the work of the church

and people were leaving. People were leaving and those who weren't leaving wished they had courage to leave. People were sleeping and those who weren't asleep wished they could fall asleep.

So the pastor sitting right behind the speaker looked over at the Deacon and said, "Deacon what are we going to do? We need to get that guy stopped." The Deacon looked at him and said, "I tell you what -- think about this -- the next time he gets directly in front of you where no one in the congregation can see you, why don't you hit him in the back of the head with the hymn book?" The pastor thought - "That would be a terrible thing to do; I couldn't do that; that would be awful."

But his patience wore thin and the next time the minister got directly in front of him where nobody from the congregation would see the pastor hauled off and let that hardback hymnal fly from left field. Just about the time it should have hit the preacher right behind the ear he moved his head and the hymnal went right down in the front row and hit the head deacon right between the eyes. He fell out in the floor.

And the people all gathered around and they said, "Deacon are you hurt? Are you hurt?" He said, "No I'm not hurt; hit me again; I can still that fellow preaching."

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I'm not making any guarantees. There are some things that go along with thirty-five years of seniority and Carmelita told me

this morning my hair is getting greyer. We are not speaking till this evening.

If you have your Bibles turn with me please to Romans chapter 12 and get it prepared because it is a chapter that I hope that these graduating seniors will refer to often. It is a chapter that I hope you will refer to often. It is a chapter that each one of us need to believe and we need to follow every day of our lives.

CHORUS & PRAYER

As we talk today to these graduating seniors from our eighth Mount Paran Christian School graduating class --- from our high school of a school of around 620 students --- I not only want to talk to them, but I want to talk to each one of you today about a very important subject that is found in this chapter of Romans 12 the first two verses of which we have just read.

In this particular chapter what we find is a call to commitment. There is no greater call that could be given to young people today - particularly those who are graduating or to all of us -- than the call to commitment to Jesus Christ.

I wish I could say to you graduating seniors today and to all of us in that matter - that I could say - Welcome to Camelot, to Utopia, to Shangerla, to heaven, to the authenticity and to the guarantee of the American dream, but all of us today know that that is really not a possibility.

When we color our society today we cannot color it Camelot or Shangerla, Utopia or even the American dream.

When we color our society today it is colored confused - uncertain - in many areas chaotic.

If you read the Atlanta Journal Constitution on May 30, you probably noticed in one of the sections of the paper that it says - "Today's graduating seniors represent the most culturally diverse generation in history." It went on to say in the next sentence that "our graduating seniors are bold, they are independent and they think they can take care of themselves in a world that they are increasingly mistrusting."

By the same token it was Cal Thomas who said - "You know we were promised and this generation told us that we would have an Age of Aquarius, but all it has really given to us is a string of shattered lives, broken dreams and societal disillusion."

So I have to be realistic this morning. We have to talk about truth and the way things really are. It is difficult for us to understand sometimes the way things really are. So I have to say to these graduating seniors and to each one of us - I have to welcome you to a world where one out of every two marriages end in divorce; when one out of every three pregnancies ends in abortion; when one out of every three births is out of wedlock; one out of every four high school students will not graduate but will drop out.

I have to welcome to a world and a society in America of 90 million functional illiterates. I have to tell you where you are facing a society where that murder is the leading cause of death for African/American males between 18 and 24 and that if you are an adolescent of a minority group living in Washington, D.C. the capital of so-called Christian America you have more likelihood of being killed in the street than one of our American soldiers did in the jungles and fields of Vietnam.

I have to say to you that you are entering into a world where there are one million Americans suffering from the HIV virus that we know as AIDS and the number is increasing every day.

It is in the midst of that world that we find ourselves talking about "baby boomers" and "baby busters."

Across this congregation this morning we all represent Depression babies and I'll not ask how many of you came through the Depression. We talk about "baby boomers" that came right after the Second World War and the late 40s and 50s and 60s.

Then we represent to us today in this graduating class the "baby busters" born in the 60s and the 70s and the 80s. Along with these "baby busters" because the boom in the birthrate declined radically and we called it "baby busters" and along with them comes a whole different kind of a package. It is a whole different kind of a mindset because they have lived and we have lived with them through a world of change such as the world has never known before. They have lived during a time when we have moved from an industrial

era to a service era. We have moved from a sacred view of life to a secular view of life. We have moved from the Christian era to the post-Christian era.

I can't welcome you to a Christian world; I have to welcome you to a pagan society. America is one of the most paganize nations in the world today.

ILLUSTRATION

There is a lot of difference between the boomers and the "busters." The "boomers" is the "me generation;" the busters" are the "we generation." The "boomers" live to work; but the "busters" work to live. The "boomers" identify with Jay Leno - he is not in the Bible but you probably know who he is. The "busters" identify with David Letterman. The "boomers" have an enlightenment world view; the "busters" have a post-modern world view. The "boomers" are into institutions, but the "busters" are into relationships. The "boomers" talks about propositional truth; but the "busters" talk about relational truth. The "boomers" are into excellence; but the "busters" are into authenticity. The "boomers" are into growth; but the "busters" are into community. The "boomers" talk about the lonely man in the lonely crowd. But the "busters" talk about just being alone for alone's sake, and that is why we brand them often "Generation X" because they are so different and they can't be categorized and they can't be institutionalized. The "boomers" are into success. The "busters" are into wholeness and trying to find completeness and satisfaction. The "boomers" are

more into spirituality, but the "busters" are more into secular things and doing for themselves. They are bold and independent; they think they can make it a world that they increasingly mistrust.

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ILLUSTRATION

Maybe it is best illustrated when we talk about the post-modern world view by Ravi Zacharias that we all know - who has preached her for us and who is one of the great, great scholars and voices for evangelicalism today.

He said he was giving a lecture at Ohio University on one occasion. As he was being driven to the lecture, he passed the new Wexner Arts Center. The driver said as they were going by - "This is a new art building for the University. It is a fascinating building designed in the post-modernist view of reality. The building has no pattern. The staircases go nowhere. Pillars support nothing." The architect designed the building to reflect life. It went nowhere and was mindless and senseless.

Dr. Zacharias said - "I turned to the man describing it and asked, "Did they do the same thing with the foundation?" He laughed - "You can't do that with the foundation."

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You can get away with the infrastructure; you can get away with random thoughts that sound good in defense of a world view

that ultimately does not make sense, but once you start tampering with the foundations you begin to see the serious effects.

The foundations are in jeopardy. The foundations of our culture do not provide coherent sets of answers any more. ~~That~~ is why we have the Mount Paran Christian School. That is why you hopefully chose to come here because you had a feeling and a calling that it is important for you to preserve the foundations and you don't leave this school today and you don't walk out of this church and this congregation of people who support you with thought and prayer without a message. You don't leave here today without a mission. Because we are having to depend upon you to preserve the foundations of American society and the foundations of Christian heritage. And the very foundation upon what you stand is being shifted and taken out from under you, and you are sent forth in order to strengthen the foundation of a Judeo-Christian culture that has brought the greatest nation that history has ever known.

We leave you and send you forth with the message of Genesis 1 and 1 -

In the beginning God created the heaven and earth.

We send you forth with Genesis 1 and 27 -

Man is made in the image of God.

We send you forth with Luke 11:28 -

Blessed is that person who hears the Word and obeys it.

We send you forth with Matthew 4 and 4 -

Man shall not live by bread alone but every word that comes out of the mouth of God.

We send you forth with John chapter 14 -

Let not your heart be troubled. You believe in God believe also in me. In my house are many mansions. If it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you and if I go to prepare a place for you I am going to come again and receive you unto myself that where I am there you might be also.

We send you forth with Second Peter chapter 3 verse 10 -

The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night and the heavens will disappear with a great war and all of the elements will be burned and the earth in all of its form will be laid bare.

Seeing that this is the way that the world is going to be destroyed - what kind of lives should we live, the Apostle Peter asks. He answered by saying - We ought to live holy and godly lives because we look for a promise and that promise is a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwells righteousness. The righteousness of this nation will depend upon what you put into the nation not what you take out of it. And God is calling you to infuse this country with the knowledge of the fact that Jesus

Christ is Lord. And every eye shall see Him and every knee shall bow before Him and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of the Father.

You say - Pastor Walker, that sounds fantastic, I would really like to be able to live that kind of life and to be a part of establishing the foundation so that they will no longer shift, to bringing us back to what made this nation great and to bring us back to what made the church great in this nation.

You can't live without the understanding of where you fit in society and where you fit in church. Those are two very important decisions.

But we say - We are so confused. We talk about being one of the most illiterate, industrial nations in the world. We talk about being Biblical illiterates in the church because when people who have gone to church all of their lives are given Biblical tests generally we flunk. We have failed to take into our very being, our very psyche, our very intellectual mode the understanding of who God is and what He wants to do.

JOKE

I heard the story told of some mothers that were talking about their young people that were graduating from high school.

One mother said - My young daughter has a weird understanding of history. She thinks that BC means "before cable." Another mother said, I know what you mean. My young daughter came home from Sunday school the other day and said - Mother we just finished

Genesis and I am really disappointed. No where does it tell us when God created the malls.

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The other day I was talking to you about the "gift of remoting," that the gift of remoting belongs to the male species. It is the first thing I said that touched that brother. The man called me on the phone and said - I heard what you said about the male species having the gift of remoting but my wife has the "gift of malling." And that belongs to the female species.

Whether you agree with that or you don't agree with that the very fact that we are dealing with today is who am? The "busters" want to know - Who am I? These young people are constantly asking themselves - Who am I? Why am I here? Where am I going? What is the answer to all the needs of my life? They have tried it on every front. They have tried it with cocaine. They have tried it with marijuana. They have tried it with heroine. They have tried it with alcohol. They have tried it with sexual promiscuity. They have tried it with rebellion. They have tried it in every aspect that they could and with the same gnawing feeling is still there and it will never be filled until they come to the understanding there is only one power that can meet the needs of man today and that is the power that this school represents and brings to their hearts and that is the fact that Jesus Christ is the answer. "On Christ the solid rock I stand all other ground is sinking sand."

So God makes a call to commitment. The word commitment is not a fashionable word today. The studies tell us and the research bears out that people don't make long range commitments any more. It is hard to get people to commit for a short period of time. We don't like that sense of obligation. That's what makes it hard for some people to understand the real meaning of taking up a cross and following Jesus Christ.

Commitment means "to vow" - it means "to promise" - it means "to pledge" - it means "to decide" - it means "to act" - it means "to swear" as swearing that certain things are true and certain things are false - it means "to vow" in that respect. But commitment also means to intrust. If I commit something to you I entrust something to you.

Carmelita and I got married - it will soon be 43 years - if I remember correctly and I better remember correctly we only have a couple of days left and it will be June 6 - 43 years. I made a commitment; she made a commitment; we entrusted to each other a commitment.

When I accepted Jesus Christ as Lord of my life I made a commitment

And each one of you who sits in these first two pews you are called to commitment.

We don't know all about a commitment and that is where Romans chapter 12 comes in. Romans is one of the greatest pieces of literature that was ever written - inspired of God, written by the

Apostle Paul, it was one of the dynamic forces in Augustine of Hippo, the great Saint Augustine becoming a Christian. It was a dynamic force in Martin Luther becoming a Christian. It was a dynamic force in John Wesley becoming a Christian. And perhaps the greatest piece of literature that we could ever read.

If there is one chapter that I would hope you would read everyday of your life and that you would memorize it and commit it to memory - Romans chapter 12.

The first eleven chapters tell us how that a soul can become righteous. The next four chapters - 12 through 16 - tell us how that a righteous soul should live.

In chapter 12 it gives to us the understanding of commitment.

I have worked with hundreds of young people - I have worked with thousands when you count the "Hippie Movement." Every day of my life for about five or six years with dealing with Hippies of one kind or another and most of us remember the Hippie Movement in the late 60s and early 70s. It is a different kind of a young person today. He is more cynical; he is not as open; he is not as sensitive to what the gospel would have to say. Everything is questioned; everything is doubted; everything has to be proved.

The greatest problem I see today is making a commitment.

I talk to young couples who are getting married; they are not sure they want to make a commitment. Commitment is not the kind of word that you hear on the eleven o'clock news. Nobody likes to talk about commitment. But you cannot live for Jesus Christ and

follow His Word unless you take up a cross and follow Him and learn that in Him we live and move and have our being. And when we commit to Him He commits to us and through that reciprocal commitment God meets every one of our needs.

How do we do that?

First of all, if you look at Romans chapter 12 verses 1 and 2 he says - I have to consecrate my body. Commitment means a consecration of my body.

Therefore, I urge you brothers in view of God's mercy to offer your bodies as living sacrifices holy and pleasing to God which is your spiritual worship. And do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is - His good, pleasing and perfect will.

What that says is - we consecrate the body. To consecrate means to sanctify. It means to set apart. It means to offer for service. You are going to consecrate your body to someone or something or some cause or some place. You are going to give it in some kind of decision to something bigger than you are. Every person does that either at a conscious level or an unconscious level. He lives by some kind of philosophy of life. You say - "Well I don't live by a philosophy of life." Yes you do. Your

philosophy of life is that you don't have a philosophy of life; but that is your philosophy of life. I give my body to something.

See - the greatest problem we have today is that the body is constantly begin bombarded because that is where we get our information from the outside world.

Each one of us is a body - a soul and a spirit. The body is the gateway to the external world. The soul is the gateway to the self. The spirit is the gateway to God.

Now what the world is trying to get us to do is to live everything by our body because everything we see on television - all of the advertisements just about everything has to do with the body. "Live for the body. The body is god."

In New Ageism and most occultism the body is god.

What Satan wants you to is get so hung up in your body that you forget who you really are and why God has really created you.

ILLUSTRATION

When I was traveling for the Air Force in 1972 and had the privilege of consulting in all of our Air Force bases in the Pacific.

I was in Utopawa Thailand when we made the last two big raids into Vietnam. I had the dubious privilege of briefing and talking with and preaching a little sermonette and praying with our flyers before they went out to fly knowing that many of them probably would not come back.

I was sitting in a restaurant one night with three chaplains. We were eating dinner together and a young Officer came over and talked with us a few minutes and after he left they said - "That man has a great testimony." They said - He was a flyer and got shot down in North Vietnam. He was put in a tiger cage - a little 6 x 9 bamboo cage where he lived for nearly a year.

He was one of the fortunate ones because that village where he was held as a prisoner was invaded by the American forces and he was set free and liberated and able to get back. He rehabilitated and we sent him back here and he serves as a consultant now with us. He is no longer flying missions.

We talked to him and asked - "How did you survive? How did you survive that torture? How did you survive that bad food? How did you survive being contained to a space no larger than 6 x 9 out in the elements where you got all the wind and the rain and all of the storms that come in a tropical climate."

They said - "He made this statement." "My buddies and I when we got together we formed a Bible out of what we remembered. We were not sure that everything in it was Bible. Some of it was philosophy and some of it was Shakespeare, and some of it was stuff we made up. But we had a POW Bible." They said - "Is that the Prisoner of War Bible?" He said, "No it was the Power of the Word Bible."

Said - "We made a covenant with each other - that we knew our bodies would be tortured. We knew that our souls would be bruised.

But we were never going to let them touch our spirit. And whatever happened in our lives we were going to live by the Spirit." He said - "We learned to pray in the Spirit; we learned to sing in the Spirit; we learned to talk in the Spirit; we learned to walk in the Spirit. We went through the torture; we went through the agonizing knowing that our spirit would live forever. They could kill the body; they could bruise the soul but that spirit would live as long as God lives."

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I am saying to you when you consecrate your body you learn to live by your spirit.

But the second thing he says here is that we have to - in verses 3 through 8 - the second step if we are going to fulfill this call to commitment is - that we have to understand and we have to develop our own uniqueness. Every person in here is different and every person here is unique in the sight of God but I find so many Christians and so many believers, so many people who claim the name of Jesus Christ who think they are just one of the hoards. The "very hairs of your head are numbered." He has a plan for your life. Verse 3 -

For by the grace given to me I say to everyone of you - do not think of yourself any higher than you ought but rather think of yourself with sober judgement in accordance with the measure of faith that God has given you.

So be honest in your appraisal of your uniqueness.

Just as each one of us has one body within our members and these members do not have all the same function so in Christ we who are many form one body and each member belongs to all the others.

So it has to be interactive. You are a part of a team. You are a part of a body. You are a part of other people.

But then it needs to be emphasized. We have different gifts.

According to the grace given us - if a man's gift is prophesying let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving let him serve. If it is teaching let him teach. If it is encouraging let him encourage. If it is contributing to the needs of others let him give generously. If it is leadership let him govern diligently. If it is showing mercy let him do it cheerfully.

What is my uniqueness? What is there about you and what is there about me that is outstanding?

When you look at the Apostle Paul you think to yourself - I could never be like that - look at all his gifts and look at all of his power, but you get a uniqueness about Paul when you read First Corinthians chapter 2 verses 1 through 4 - He said -

When I came to you, Corinthians, I did not come to you with any kind of superior knowledge or superior wisdom; I did not come to you with eloquence. I came to you with weakness; I came to you with fear; I came to you with trembling; I knew that I was nothing within myself. The only thing I knew was Christ and Him crucified.

But then he said -

My message and my preaching were not in persuasive words but they are in the demonstration of the Spirit's power so that your faith would not rest on men's wisdom but it would rest on the power of the living God.

And it is not what you are that counts. It is what Christ does with you that counts. It is what you give to Him to use and what you give to Him to use He uses and little is much when God is in it. Do you believe that here this morning? Well praise Him in this place. Little is much when God is in it.

But we lose our sense of uniqueness and we get so caught up in our negativism and we don't cut ourselves any slack; we don't allow ourselves any understanding of being human.

I've been with you so long - these thirty-five years - that you've seen just about every faux faux there is possible because we are all human being.

JOKE

I heard the story told of a little boy who was playing little League baseball. He was a good fielder. He could catch the ball well. He could throw the ball well. He could run fast. He understood the game. He was a good pitcher. But he just couldn't hit the ball. He struck out every time they got up. Eye hand coordination was terrible when it came to batting. They decided that it was so bad and his attitude - he was so down on himself because he struck out every time. So the coaches and his mother got together about his attitude. They said - what you have to do is think positive.

His mother told him - I want you to go out in the yard and throw that ball up and say to yourself - "Mr. Ball - I'm the world's greatest hitter and you hit that ball." He went out in the ball and threw it up - "I'm the world's greatest hitter" - And missed it. Twenty times - "The world's greatest hitter" and missed it every time.

Got real discouraged and sat down with the ball in his left hand and the bat in his right hand and thought - What am I going to do? Then he remembered - they said - You got to find something positive in everything you do. So he thought for a minute and he looked at the bat and said, "Mr. Batt I want you to know I'm the world's greatest pitcher and I can strike you out every time."

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You got to discover and develop your uniqueness.

You don't have to be one of the hoard. You make that choice. You do not have to go with the crowd. You make that choice. You can say "No." You can make that choice. You do not have to marry the first "cat" that comes along. You are better off single than to marry a wimp -- and the woods are full of them. Is this alright?

Develop your uniqueness.

But the third thing he tells us here - if we are really going to have this call to commitment. But the third thing he tells us here if we are really going to have this call to commitment then he says we have to personalize our priorities. Look what he says in verse 9 -

Your love must be sincere. Hate what is evil.
Cling to what is good and be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal. Keep your spiritual fervor serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer, share with God's people who are in need, practice hospitality.

What he is really saying there is - personalize certain priorities in your life. Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil. Cling to what is good. Every one of these statements is a priority because we all live by our priorities.

We make a decision whether we are going to live by titles or we are going to live by testimonies.

ILLUSTRATION

I got a story here by Tony Campolo, I think it is very interesting and puts it very, very well - about priorities and how important that priorities really are.

When he talks about titles or priorities he says this -

Tony Campolo as you know is a Christian sociologist who has written many books and who has preached here for us. You are aware of him -- very humorous.

He says -I belong to an African/American church in West Philadelphia. He said - I didn't join one. I joined a white church. But black people moved into our neighborhood. The white folks all moved except for our family; we are Italian and we don't move. You try to move us and we will take care of you. We weren't' going to leave that church because my father had donated the offering plates.

Once a year in my church we have student recognition day. They love student recognition day because the old folks never had a chance to become much of anything because America was racist. Still is but they can't get away with what they once got away with. The bright young men and women are becoming something now. The old folks love it when they come back on student recognition day and say - I'm studying music at Julliard; or - I'm studying Law at Harvard. Or, I'm studying literature at Dartmouth. Or, I'm

studying engineering at MIT. The old folks just sit there and say - My - my - thank you Jesus.

If you've never been to a black church you don't know what I'm talking about right now. You folks don't know how to get with it. Last time I preached for Pastor Wiley Jackson I preached everything I knew and some things I didn't know - some things that were new to God Himself.

It is a beautiful thing to hear the moanings and the groanings of the people in the congregation.

When they got all finished - my pastor got up and looked at these 40 some bright university students who were achieving so much and said - Children - he talks like that - he said, Children you are going to die. That's a good thing to tell kids. You don't think you are going to die but you are going to die. They are going to drop you in a hole. They are going to throw dirt in your face and they are going to go back to the church and eat potato salad. Ain't it the truth, he said,

When you were the born you were the only one that cried. Everybody else's was happy.

But that is not important. What is important is this - when you die you will be the only one that is happy and everyone else's will cry.

It depends on what you live for. Are you living for these titles or are you living for these testimonies? That preaches - titles or testimonies.

He said - Do you want one of those tombstones that says - Here lies John Jones, Ph.D. President of Rotary (President of this) - do you want titles or do you want people standing around your grave giving testimonies of how you loved them in the name of Jesus.

Then he went on as my pastor can do - Tony Campolo says - he swept through the Bible in only five minutes - see white preachers can't do that he says. White preachers say - Today we are going to exegete the second verse of the second chapter of the first statement of chapter 1. But I mean - Tony Campolo says - this guy started in Genesis and went through Revelation in one fell swoop.

He said - There was Moses and there was Pharaoh. Pharaoh was ruler of Egypt - that's a good title - Ruler of Egypt - but when it was over - that's all he had. He was the Ruler of Egypt and that was his title. He had the title but Moses had the testimony. H

He said there was Elijah and there was Jezebel. Jezebel was Queen. Good title - Queen. (This stuff will preach right here I do believe.) What woman would not like the title "Queen?" Queen Jezebel -- she was going to wipe out Elijah. But when it was over that is all she had. She had the title but Elijah had the testimonies.

Get's to you doesn't it? Campolo says.

He said - There was Nebuchadnezzar and there was Daniel. Nebuchadnezzar was the king of Babylon. Good title - King - King of Babylon. But when it was over - that is all he had. He had the title, but Daniel had the testimonies.

People - one of these days they will drop you in a whole and throw dirt in your face and go back to the church and eat potato salad and what will you leave behind? Titles? All American? Won this award? Won that award? Is that what you leave behind? Will there will be people standing around your grave because you loved them in the power of Jesus and taught them how to love others sacrificially in His name?

You got a choice between the titles and the testimonies. It is nice if you can have both. But if you have to make a choice you go for the testimonies.

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Those are your priorities.

Then you see what the Bible says too - it says finally that you have to maintain accountability. When you look at verse number 14 and following -

Bless those who persecute you. Bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice. Mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. Do not repay evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody, but as far as possible as far as it depends on you live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge my

friend but leave room for God's wrath for it is written - 'It is mine to avenge. I will repay.' Says the Lord. On the contrary - if your enemy is hungry feed him; if he is thirsty give him something to drink and in so doing you will heap burning coals on his head. Do not be overcome by evil but overcome evil with good.

Whether you like it or whether you don't like it every person here is accountable. You have an accountability to God - you cannot escape that - I don't care what religion you belong to or what your thoughts are - if you are atheistic or agnostic or you absolutely don't know who you are - you have to meet God.

Romans 14:12 -

Everyone of us shall give account of himself unto God.

There is no way to get around that. You have been sold a bill of good by secular education - not here but secular education. From the persons I used to hear speak and I read a lot out of was old - Hobart Mier - an atheistic psychology teacher at both Yale and Harvard and President of the American Psychological Association. He ended up by committing suicide in 1982. He wrote an article - "Sin: The Lesser of two Evils." It appeared in the American Psychologists of 1960. He wrote - now note this very carefully - you want to get a handle on what is happening in America -

For several decades we psychologists have looked upon the whole matter of sin and moral accountability as the great ecobus and it claimed our liberation from its epic making but at length we have discovered to be free in this sense - that is to have the excuse of being sick or being sinful is to court the danger of also becoming lost - ethically, neutral and free but have cut off the very roots of our being, lost the deepest roots of selfhood and identity and with the radices themselves find ourselves asking - Who am I? What is my destiny? What does this living mean?

It is interesting - he quotes from Anna Russell psychiatric folk song - and Anna says this in her folk song -

At three I had an ambivalence toward my brothers so it follows naturally I poisoned all my lovers. But now I am happy; I have learned the lesson that has taught - that everything I do that is wrong is someone else's fault.

Now -- you make choices. You are responsible for those choices and you have to live with those choices. There is a law in

this land that comes out of the Bible that was embedded in the very being of man.

Whatsoever a person sows that shall he also reap.

We have an accountability. What do you owe? You owe to your friends loyalty. You owe to your enemies forgiveness. You owe to your boss service. You owe to children who look up to you a good example. You owe to your father respect. You owe to your mother gratitude and devotion. You owe to your mate love and faithfulness. You owe to mankind charity. You owe to God your life.

ILLUSTRATION

The Master was searching for a vessel to use.

On the shelf there were many, which one would He choose?

Take me cried the gold one I'm shiny and bright, my beauty and luster will outshine the rest. For someone like you Master I would be best.

The Master passed on with no word at all and looked at the silver urn narrow and tall.

I'll serve you dear Master, I'll pour out your wine, I'll be at your table whenever you dine. My lines are so graceful and my carvings so true, silver would always compliment you.

Unheeding the Master passed on to the brass. It was wide mouth and shallow and polished like glass.

Here, here (cried this vessel,) I know I will do - place me on your table for all men to view.

Look at me, - (cried the goblet of crystal so clear,) my transparency shows my contents so dear. Though fragile am I, I will serve you with pride and I'm sure I will be happy in your house to abide.

The Master came next to a vessel of wood, polished and carved it solidly stood.

You may use me dear Master, (the wooden bowl said,) but I'd rather you'd use me for fruit - please, no bread.

Then the Master looked down and saw a vessel of clay, empty and broken it helplessly lay -- no hope of the vessel the Master might choose to cleanse and make whole to fill and to use.

Ah, (he said,) this is the vessel I've been hoping to find. I will mend it and cleanse it and make it all mine. I need not the vessel with pride of itself for the ones who know and sits on the shelf, the one who is big mouthed, shallow and loud or the one that displays their contents so proud -- not the one who

thinks he can do all things just right - but
this plain earthen vessel filled with my power
and my might.

Then gently he lifted the vessel of clay - mended it and
cleansed it and filled it that day. He spoke to it kindly -

There is work you must do. You pour out to
others and I'll pour into you.

Shall we pray.

Titles or Testimonies

A story by Tony Campolo

I belong to an African-American church in West Philadelphia. I didn't join one. I joined a white church. But Black people moved into our neighborhood. The white folks all moved out — except for our family. We're Italian and we don't move. And you try to move us, we'll take care of you. We weren't gonna leave that church because my father had donated the offering plates.

Once a year in my church we have student recognition day. They love student recognition day because the old folks never had a chance to become much of anything because America was racist. It still is, but they can't get away with what they once got away with. And the bright young men and women are becoming something now. And the old folks love it when they come back on student

recognition day and say "I'm studying music at Juliard" or "I'm studying law at Harvard" or "I'm studying literature at Dartmouth" or "I'm studying engineering at MIT." The old folks just sit there and go "My, my, thank you Jesus. Um, um, ummm." And it's a beautiful thing to hear the moanings and the groanings of the people in the congregation. And when they were all finished my pastor got up and looked at these forty-some bright university students who were achieving so much and said "Children!" He talks like that. He said "Children! You're gonna die!" That's a good thing to tell kids. He said "You don't think you're gonna die! But you're gonna die! They're gonna drop you in a hole! They're gonna throw dirt in your face! And they're gonna go back to the church and eat potato salad!"

Ain't it the truth. He said "When you were born you were the only one that cried! Everybody else was happy. That's not important! What's important is this: when you die will you be the only one that's happy and everybody else will cry? Depends." He said, "Depends on what you live for! Are you living for these titles or testimonies?" That preaches. "Titles or testimonies?" He said, "Do you want one of those tombstones that says 'Here lies John Jones, Ph.D., President of Rotary, President of this. Do you want titles? Or do you want people standing around your grave giving testimonies of how you loved them in the name of Jesus!' And then he did what only my pastor can do. He swept through the Bible in only five minutes. See, white preachers can't do that. White preachers say, 'Today, we're

Pat: Do you think this would be good for Dr. Walker for Baccalaureate? rhm

gonna exegete the 2nd verse of the 2nd chapter of 1st ... " I mean this guy started in Genesis and went through Revelation in one fell swoop. He said "There was Moses and there was Pharaoh. Pharaoh was Ruler of Egypt. That's a good title, Ruler of Egypt. But when it was over that's all he had. He was Ruler of Egypt, and that was his title. He had the title but Moses had the testimonies!" He said "There was Elijah and there was Jezebel. Jezebel was Queen. Good title, Queen. What woman wouldn't like the title Queen! Queen Jezebel. She was gonna wipe out Elijah, but when it was over that's all she had. She had the title but Elijah had the testimonies!" Gets to you doesn't it? He said "There was Nebuchadnezzar. And there was Daniel. Nebuchadnezzar was King of Babylon. Good

title, King. King of Babylon! But when it was over that's all he had. He had the title but Daniel had the testimonies! People, one of these days they will drop you in a hole and throw dirt in your face and they will go back to the church and eat potato salad and what will you leave behind? Titles? All-American? Won this award? Won that award? Is that what you leave behind? Or will there be people standing around your grave because you loved them in the power of Jesus and taught them how to love others sacrificially in His name? If ya gotta choice between the titles and the testimonies, it's nice if you can have both, but if you have to make a choice, you go for the testimonies.

Begin the year
with God
