

October 28, 2007 by Steve Brandon



The Plan of Salvation

1 Peter 1:20-21

1. God Planned it (verse 20a).
2. Jesus Accomplished it (verse 20b).
3. We Believe it (verse 21).

God has provided for us a wonderful place in which we can gather together as a church to worship Him. Though Rockford Christian High School is not our own building, it still provides a great place for us to meet. The scenery around us may not feel too much like a church building. There is no stained glass. There are no pews. There is no cross in the front of our auditorium. (In fact, come to think about it, there really isn't much of an auditorium, as we are meeting in a cafeteria). However, it is very functional for us. We have all the classrooms we could ever desire. We have a gymnasium, which provides a great place for our children before and after church. An addition, the administration of the school has been wonderful to work with. We are able to set up the facility on Saturday evenings. We are have use of the facility all day Sunday. It works out very well for us. Each and every one of us ought to be thankful for this place.

My guess is that most of us, as we walked in here this morning, weren't particularly thankful to God for this place to meet. My guess is that all of us, as we walked in here this morning, spent no time in thinking about what was involved in bringing this building into existence. But, I want for you to think for a bit about what took place in order for this building to be here for us to enjoy.

First of all, there needed to be a group of people dedicated to a cause--Christian schooling for children--who would go through the effort needed to raise funds to have such a building. I don't know the details, but I'm sure that there were some who gave substantially to see this building built. When the money was raised and allocated, the land had to be purchased. Then, an architect was needed to envision a building in his mind. This architect then wrote down his ideas on paper and drew up a set of blueprints. Long before any shovel dug any dirt, the plans for the building were written down. The location of the foundation was established. The location of the walls was determined. The outlets and switches and lights and toilets and drains and sinks and windows were all established. Every detail was worked out: the pitch of the roof, the size of the rooms, the length of the hallways, the locations of the bathrooms, the height of the ceiling. And then, the building crews came in. The excavation crew dug the foundation. The cement crews poured the cement. The construction crews put up the walls. The electricians ran the wires. The plumbers run the pipes. The roofers put on the roof. Finally, then, the school was able use the building for its intended purpose. And several years later, as we inquired into possibly renting this facility, we were granted permission to use it.

For us to enjoy the use of this building, all of things needed to take place beforehand. For all of us, this was done entirely apart from us. How many of you were involved in the raising of money to build this building? How many of you were involved in the designing of this building? How many of you were involved in the building of this building? Though we had nothing to do with any of these things, we still have the opportunity today to enjoy the use of the building. Too often, we merely think about the present, without realizing what took place in the past to allow us to come here today. Perhaps with a perspective of the sweat, labor and commitment of those who built this building, we might gain a further appreciation of our how fortunate we are to have such a wonderful facility in which to meet.

Now, what is true about this building is true about your life as well. This is especially true as you think about your salvation. You may well live most of your life taking your salvation for granted, like this building. You may think that your salvation came about because of your faith in Jesus a few years ago, never thinking much about what was involved in your coming to faith. I hope that your thinking goes beyond this. I hope that you think about how your salvation came about because of the work of Christ 2,000 years ago. Apart from Jesus coming into the flesh and dying upon the cross, you wouldn't be saved today. But, according to the Bible, the planning stages of your salvation took place long before Jesus ever walked the earth. In fact, the planning stages of your salvation came about because of what the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit had planned to do before the world was ever created.

This may be a new thought to you, but it is plainly taught throughout the Bible. Before the creation of the world, God planned our salvation. When the time was right, Jesus came to accomplish our salvation. Today, through faith, we have come to enjoy our salvation. But, what we enjoy today was only as a result of the planning and working of God on our behalf, long before any of us ever came to be.

This morning, I plan on focusing your attention upon "The Plan of Salvation." I'm not merely going to focus our attention upon how it is that you are saved. But rather, we will look at the plan which God conceived in His mind, and brought about in time. The reason we will look upon these things is because Peter directs our attention to these things. Let's consider our text:

1 Peter 1:20-21.

For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you who through Him are believers in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

My message is appropriately entitled, "The Plan of Salvation." This morning, we are going to see the big picture of our salvation. Peter begins

first by focusing upon the role of God the Father, which forms the basis of my first point.

1. God Planned it (verse 20a).

Look there at what Peter writes, "For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world." This is obviously talking about God the Father and Jesus. Before the world was ever created, Jesus was foreknown by God the Father. There are several passages in the Bible that give us an idea of what took place before this world was ever created.

One great place to see this comes in the opening verses of the gospel of John. There, we read, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1). Later on in John's gospel, it is clear that "the Word" is a reference to Jesus (1:18). You might easily read this verse this way, "In the beginning was Jesus, and Jesus was with God, and Jesus was God" (John 1:1). Before heavens and earth were created, there was Jesus. Jesus was "with God" and Jesus "was God." (Here is a portion of the Trinity. You have two Persons of the Godhead identified: Jesus and God. They are "with" one another. They indeed "are" one another.)

For my purposes this morning, I want to point out the significance of one of these phrases. When John writes, "the Word was with God," you might easily translate this, "the Word was toward God." The Greek is *proV ton Qeon* (*pros ton Theon*). The idea here is that God the Father and God the Son were "face to face." They were like people out to eat at a restaurant seated opposite one another, looking directly into each other's face. They were with each other in intimate communion with one another. We don't know everything that was taking place between them, but there was a close relationship of intimate fellowship of the Father and the Son before the creation of the world.

Jesus alluded to how glorious this was in His high priestly prayer when He prayed, "Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was" (John 17:5). Before the world ever came to be, God the Father and God the Son existed in glory, each in intimate fellowship with each other. And how easy it was for Peter to write that Jesus "was foreknown" by God the Father "before the foundation of the world" (1 Peter 1:20). Peter heard Jesus pray this prayer in the upper room.

But, here in 1 Peter 1:20, Peter is alluding to much more than a mere "foreknowledge" of God in the sense of relationship. Peter's words here have the "foreknowledge" of God in the sense of purpose. Peter just finished describing our redemption in the precious blood of Christ in verses 18 and 19, "Knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, [the blood] of Christ." And so, God's "foreknowledge" of Jesus has to do with God's plan of redemption.

Jesus would come as the One who would spill out His precious blood for our sins. When Jesus died upon the cross as the Lamb of God, it was no accident. Just as the windows in this cafeteria aligning the south wall were no accident, so also was the death of Jesus no accident. The architect planned for the windows to be here. So also, did God the Father plan to have Jesus be the bloody sacrifice.

But, the scope of God's foreknowledge went well beyond Jesus. If Jesus is to be the Savior, there must be a people to save. He foreknew those of us who believe as well. Peter mentions this in the first two verses of this epistle: 1 Peter 1:1-2, "1. Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen according to the **foreknowledge** of God the Father." These scattered saints had been chosen by God, long before any of them had come to be. In several places, the Bible speaks of God's choosing a people for Himself before the creation of the world.

For instance, in Ephesians 1:4 we read, "God chose us in Him before the foundation of the world." Before the world was ever created, God, the Father, made a choice. He chose us, not because of any merit of our own, nor because of anything that we did or would do. Rather, based upon His sovereign grace, God chose us as those He would redeem. Some rightly call this, "Unconditional Election," which the Bible clearly teaches.

This verse also speaks about the manner in which God chose us. He chose us, "in Him." That is, God chose us, "in Christ." God didn't choose us to redeem us without any idea of how exactly He would actually accomplish this. God didn't take out a loan on a credit card, only to figure out later how to pay for it. On the contrary, God knew full well how it was that He was going to redeem His chosen ones. It would be through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Before the foundation of the world, Jesus was decreed to be the Lamb that would be slain.

The next verse in Ephesians demonstrates how secure this was. Ephesians 1:5, "God predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself." That is, God decreed that these things would take place. God insured that these things would actually take place. He predestined us to believe in Jesus and thereby to be adopted as sons through Jesus Christ. This is what Peter is talking about when he said that Jesus was "foreknown before the foundation of the world" (verse 20a). Peter was addressing the plans of God long before time began. As D. A. Carson puts it poetically, ...

Long before the creation began,
He foreknew those He'd ransom in Christ;
Long before time's cold hour-glass ran,
He ordained the supreme Sacrifice.

In the cross He removed our disgrace,
To the praise of His glorious grace.
To the praise of His glorious grace.
To the praise of His glorious grace. [\[1\]](#)

There is a reason why God has done things this way. It's so that nobody may ever boast of anything that they had done in meriting or gaining salvation. "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast" (Eph. 2:8-9). It is "by His doing [that] you are in Christ Jesus" (1 Cor. 1:30).

God planned our salvation before the foundation of the world. Consider 2 Timothy 1:9, "[God] has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity." We are not saved by our works. Rather, we are saved by God's own purpose and grace. This was granted to us in Christ from all eternity. That is, from before the foundation of the world. We get a sense of this also from Paul's letter to Titus. In chapter 1, verse 2, Paul speaks about "the hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised from all eternity." Think about this with me. From all eternity, God made a promise. Who could God possibly make a promise to? In eternity past, there was only the Trinity in fellowship with one another. It must be that God the Father promised to give the church to God the Son. But, this promise came at a cost. It meant that the Son would need to die to purchase the church, which He was willing to do.

This is what Peter was getting at in verse 20, when he speaks about God foreknowing Jesus before the foundation of the world. It's not merely talking about God "looking down the corridors of time" and knowing what would take place before it actually happened. On the contrary, Peter is talking about God "foreordaining the future." In fact, some translations bring in this fact at this very point. The King James Version and the New King James translate this using the word, "foreordained." "He was indeed foreordained before the foundation of the world." The NIV translates this, "He was chosen before the creation of the world." In both instances, the translators recognized that with God, knowing beforehand implies God's foreordaining the event.

Wayne Grudem says it well in his commentary on 1 Peter.

When God knows something beforehand it is certain that the event will occur, and assuming the event to be therefore ordained by God seems to be the only alternative to the non-Christian idea of a certainty of events brought about by impersonal, mechanistic fate. ... The immediately preceding context with its emphasis on Christ's redeeming death suggests that it is as a suffering saviour that God 'foreknew' or thought of the Son before the foundation of the world. These considerations combine to indicate that the 'foreknowledge' was really an act of God in eternity past whereby he determined that his Son would come as the Saviour of mankind. [\[2\]](#)

This morning, it's my aim to press upon all of you the fact that God's "Plan of Salvation" began long before any of us had ever existed, let alone thought about our salvation. In 1 Peter 1:20, God is like the architect, who thought about this very building in which we are now meeting and wrote his ideas down on his blueprints. At the time in which the blueprints were being created for this building, none of us were aware of what the architect of this building was doing. In the same way, none of us were aware of God's plans to save a people for Himself out of a world that He would create. In this case, God was planning His church and our salvation.

See, God planned these things in eternity past. That is, "before the foundation of the world." That is, before the creation of the world. That is, before Genesis 1. This is what God did in eternity. He planned the building of His church. He did so by choosing those whom He would redeem from fallen humanity. God determined how it is that they would be redeemed. God decreed that Jesus would die for the sins of the elect, so that He might redeem them and bring them into His church. In the due process of time, Jesus came to be the Savior, which leads to my second point, ...

2. Jesus Accomplished it (verse 20b).

This comes in the second half of verse 20, "but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you."

The idea here isn't that Jesus "came from nowhere." Rather, it's that Jesus came on the scene when the time was right. The builders of this building didn't merely show up the day that some people had the idea of building a school. No, there was much preparation to take place before any building would take place. First of all, the vision for a new school building needed to be cast. Then, the finances needed to be secured. Land needed to be purchased. The city permits had to be obtained. The school needed to be designed. And then the builders would come in the appropriate sequence.

With Jesus, it was similar. He had to wait until the time was right. Peter is getting at this when he says that Jesus came "in these last days." For there to be "last days" there needed to be "former days." This is why Paul said in Galatians 4:4-5, "When the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, so that He might redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons." The time had to be right for Jesus to come.

There were many things that needed to be established before Jesus could be rightly understood. Jesus couldn't have come on the scene 10 days after the fall. His sacrifice upon the cross would almost be meaningless, for none would be prepared to understand its significance. But, God taught the world through time of the coming of Christ.

First of all, God needed to establish a law, so that people might understand their sin, so that they might understand their need of a Savior. It is through the law that the knowledge of sins comes (Rom. 3:20). Also, the Lord needed to establish a pattern of how exactly it was that sins could be forgiven. This pattern was given in the Old Testament sacrifices. For years, the people of Israel offered sacrifice after sacrifice after sacrifice. Eventually, one could almost come to say that "without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness" (Heb. 9:22). Through the sacrifices over years and years, God was teaching us that a Savior would need to come and shed His blood.

But, not any blood was able to be shed. It was only a the blood of a pure animal. If an animal had a defect of any kind, it wasn't permitted to be sacrificed. So, a Savior would need to be a pure Savior, without sin.

But, this wasn't all that the Lord wanted to establish before the coming of the Savior. He also wanted to teach them about access to God. Over the years, it was clear to any Israelite that God wasn't to be taken lightly. When establishing the tabernacle, the Lord made sure that

there was one place in the midst of the tabernacle that would be a sacred place. It came to be known as the "holy of holies." Only a priest could enter into that small room (15 feet by 15 feet). But not any priest, only the high priest. And not at any time, but only once each year, during Yom Kippur, The Day of Atonement. The role of this priest was crucial in obtaining forgiveness of sins. The priest was needed to offer up the sacrifice on behalf of the people. So, a Savior would need to be a priest, who could bring the people into God's presence.

But, there were other things that the Lord wanted to instruct the people before the Savior came. God wanted to people to understand what sort of prominence this Savior would have in the kingdom. He would reign forever upon the throne of heaven as King. For years and years and years, God had kings rule the land of Israel. They clearly saw what it meant to have a bad king ruling over the nation. Of the twenty kings in Israel, all of them were evil and corrupt. Of the nineteen kings in Judah, only a handful of them were good. But, God promised to raise up a righteous king that would sit upon the throne forever. To David, God said, "When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of His kingdom forever" (2 Sam. 7:12-13). So, this Savior would come as the true King, who would lead them into prosperity and happiness and peace.

Regarding this king, Isaiah prophesied, "A child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore" (Is. 9:6-7).

But, God also wanted to make sure the people could identify this Savior. So, the Lord gave prophecy after prophecy to describe who He would be. He would be born of a virgin (Is. 7:14) in the city of Bethlehem (Mic. 5:2) of the line of David (Ps. 110). He would be a priest according to the order of Melchizedek (Ps. 110:4). He would come bringing good news to the afflicted, liberty to captives, and freedom to prisoners (Is. 61:1). The Spirit of the Lord would be upon him to open the eyes of the blind, to unstop the ears of the deaf, to give spring to the step of the lame, and to give words to the tongue of the mute (Is. 35:5). He would come with humility, mounted on a donkey (Zech. 9:9). His appearance would be humble as well. "He had not stately form or majesty that we should look upon Him, nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him" (Is. 53:2). He would be betrayed by His closest companions: "strike down the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered" (Zech. 13:7). He would be killed and buried in the tomb of a rich man (Is. 53:9). He would be "pierced through for our transgressions, [and] crushed for our iniquities" (Is. 53:5). "The Lord [would] cause the iniquity of us all to fall on Him" (Is. 53:6).

And in Daniel's prophecy, the Lord even prophesied the time of His appearance. "From the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks. ... then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing" (Dan. 9:25-26). In 444 B. C., Artaxerxes issued a decree granting permission to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem (Neh. 2:1-8). Some 480 years later, Jesus entered Jerusalem and was promptly crucified.

So, in the former times, God was busy teaching Israel of the Messiah to come, so that when the Lord had established all of these things, people were ready to understand Jesus in the "last times." After these things, people were ready to understand Jesus as Prophet. People were ready to understand Jesus as Priest. People were ready to understand Jesus as King. People were ready to understand Jesus as the pure, sacrificial Lamb. People were ready to understand Jesus as the fulfillment of prophecy.

Each Christmas time when our family gathers around the tree to open our family presents, I'm always careful to explain to the kids why exactly it is that we open Christmas presents. "We are opening these presents as a symbol of the greatest gift ever given to us: Jesus Christ." As we open them, we ought to be reminded of His life and death on our behalf. As a church, we do the same thing everytime we celebrate the Lord's Supper. We reflect back upon the meaning of the bread and of the cup, so that we might understand it when we celebrate is appropriately. This is what God did before Jesus "appeared" on the scene. He made sure that all would be in a position to realize the coming of the Messiah.

Peter says that Jesus "appeared in these last times for the sake of you." Since the coming of Christ, it has always been the "last times." His coming was a fulfillment of the Scriptures. We are awaiting His return.

Let's now look at the last phrase in verse 20, "for the sake of you." This ought to bring great encouragement to your heart this morning. When Jesus came to earth, it was with a purpose. He came for our sakes. He came with us in mind. He came with the purpose that He would redeem us.

As my alarm awoke me this morning, there was a song on the radio which many in the church sing today. I turned up the volume so that my wife could hear it, as I had spoken with her about this song last night. It's entitled, "Above All." [\[3\]](#) I remember the first time I heard it. I remember where I was. I remember who was leading the singing. As the song was played and I watched the words, I was quite encouraged. The lyrics were great. The music was easy to sing and had a nice sound to it. But, when the end of the song came, I was very discouraged. Here are the words, ...

Above all powers, above all kings
Above all nature and all created things
Above all wisdom and all the ways of man
You were here before the world began

Above all kingdoms, above all thrones
Above all wonders the world has ever known
Above all wealth and treasures of the earth
There's no way to measure what you're worth

Crucified

Laid behind a stone
You lived to die
Rejected and alone

Now, up to this point, things are wonderful. This is a song that puts God in His rightful place, as high and exalted and "above all" things. There is nothing that is further to be magnified and exalted than God. The song takes a nice turn then to think about our crucified Lord. He was so high and so exalted and yet purposefully humbled Himself so greatly. But, then the fatal lines, ...

Like a rose
Trampled on the ground
You took the fall
And thought of me
Above all

When I heard these last two words, I about melted when I saw them on the overhead. The thing about these words that are so devastating is that it places us "above all." Earlier in the song, these words were sung over and over again to signify the place of Jesus. To use them of us in some ways places us as the supreme worth of the universe. Above all, Jesus thought of us! Above kingdoms, thrones, wealth, and treasures, seems to indicate that we were worth more than this! Now, the reason why I bring this song up isn't to speak about how bad this song is. Nor is it to show you how highly discerning I am regarding lyrics.

I bring this song up because it does capture a kernel of truth that we find here in this passage. When Jesus came to earth, He came "for our sake" (1 Peter 1:20). We were in His mind as He was dying upon the cross. Oh, I don't think that He could have named each of us at the time. Nor do I think that He could have named each of the original readers of this epistle. They had never seen Jesus (1:8), nor had Jesus ever seen them. Perhaps through an exertion of His omniscience or a revelation from His heavenly Father could have helped Him. But, Jesus knew clearly that He was upon the cross for a reason. He was dying to pay the price of our sin.

I know that Jesus had us in His mind as He went to the cross. In the high priestly prayer of Jesus, He prayed for us. He said, "I do not ask on behalf of these [disciples] alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word" (John 17:20). And one of the things that Jesus prays for is that they might behold the glory of Jesus. A few verses later, Jesus says, "Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world" (John 17:24). The heartbeat of Jesus is that we who believe might see Jesus in all His glory. And so, as Jesus was thinking of us through His sufferings, it wasn't so much that we are something great, "Above All." Rather, it's so that we can see His glory and truly worship Him, who truly is "Above All."

Where this song, "Above All," may fail in lifting us up so high, it does have a measure of truth to it. Perhaps we could change the last stanza to be something like this.

Like a rose
Trampled on the ground
You took the fall
And thought of me
Through it all

I'd be much happier singing the song in this way, because it doesn't lift me up so high in the mind of Christ. But, it does keep the truth that is found in 1 Peter 1:20, namely that we play a crucial role in the historical drama of redemption. Jesus died with the intention of saving us. He appeared in the last times "for the sake of us." That is precious, and that is encouraging. And we see Peter's focus turns upon us in verse 21. It's how we are involved in "The Plan of Salvation." (1) God Planned it (verse 20a). (2) Jesus Accomplished it (verse 20b). and now, ...

3. We Believe it (verse 21).

Once a building is planned by the architect, it is built by the builders. Once it is all finished, we are able to use it! A case in point is this building in which we are meeting right now. Long ago, the architects drew up the plans. Long ago, the last of the builders finished their work. This morning, we, as a church body are able to use it and enjoy it.

This is where we come now in verse 21. Verse 21 is talking about our participation in "The Plan of Salvation." Peter writes about us, "who through [Jesus] are believers in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God" (1:21).

This verse describes how it is that we participate in "The Plan of Salvation." We participate by believing in the God who raised Jesus from the dead. We participate by believing in the God who raised Jesus up to glory. "God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:9-11). Our faith is in (as Peter said) "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Our hope is in God, who will bring us into His eternal glory "at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:13).

At this point in my message, it is appropriate for me to ask, "Do you believe?" Do you believe in God? I'm not talking about any God, I'm talking about the God who raised Jesus Christ from the dead. I'm talking about the God who has highly exalted Jesus to His right hand. Do you believe in this God? Do you believe that Jesus Christ lived a blameless life and shed His precious blood for sins (1 Pet. 1:18-19)? Do you believe that Jesus Christ rose from the dead? Do you believe that God highly exalted Jesus in heaven? Do you have a faith in God? Do you have a hope in God?

This is everything that verse 21 outlines for us. Our faith in God comes through our belief in His Son. It is "through Him" that we are believers

in God. It is "through Him" that our faith is in God.

Do you believe this? One way to test this is to ask yourself, "Are there things in my life that would change if I really believed this?" Perhaps there is some sinful behavior that you know you would need to stop if you would believe these things. Perhaps if you would believe these things, you need to change the way in which your time is allocated. Perhaps you would need to stop being involved in some activities. Perhaps your speech would need to change if you would believe these things.

Now, here's the text (because all of us can easily come up with a list of things that we know would be different if we embraced Christ more fully). When you think of these things, is your heart grieved in your failures? Does your heart cry out to God, "God, help me. I'm so weak. I need your help. I'm doing the things I hate. Help me to change!" If this is your heart, be encouraged, because this is the sign of every believer. It's not perfection in our life that proves us to be disciples, but it's direction in our life that longs to grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ, struggles and all.

But, perhaps this morning finds you in a different state. Perhaps this morning finds you very content in your sin. Perhaps this morning finds you thinking, "I know the things in my life that need to change if I would really believe in Jesus. But, quite frankly, I don't want to change. I have no desire to change. If this describes you, then you simply don't believe this. Nor do you believe in all that God has planned from eternity. Nor all that Jesus has accomplished in His life. It all means nothing to you.

In fact, this week, I had the opportunity to ask this same question to someone. I asked this person, "If you would believe in Jesus, are there things in your life that you know would need to change?" This person then gave me a list of five or six different things that would need to change if he believed in Jesus. I then asked this person, "Do you have any desire to change these things." The response back was, "No." This person had no desire to give up sin to follow Jesus. He thought that his sin was far more pleasurable than following Jesus.

If this is you, I want for you to listen to one thing that C. S. Lewis wrote. He wrote, ...

If we consider the unblushing promises of reward and the staggering nature of the rewards promised in the Gospels, it would seem that our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased. ^[4]

And the worldly pleasures, which you don't want to give up are so much less delightful than the joys of serving the Lord. Oh, may we all believe!

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on October 28, 2007 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.

[1] D. A. Carson, "To the Praise of His Glorious Grace."

[2] Wayne Grudem, 1 Peter, p. 85.

[3] Words by Paul Baloche and Lenny Leblanc.

[4] The Weight of Glory by C.S. Lewis. Preached originally as a sermon in the Church of St Mary the Virgin, Oxford, on June 8, 1942: published in THEOLOGY, November, 1941, and by the S.P.C.K, 1942.