



Song: “I’m Determined To Walk With Jesus”

Title: “What About You?”

2 Corinthians 5:18

“For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”

I come to you this morning, first of all, as a son wishing to honor the memory of his father, and secondly, and most importantly, as it pertains to eternity, I come as an evangelist. For those who do not know, an evangelist is one who communicates the good news. “Good News?” you ask, “brother preacher, I think that you’ve got the wrong church. Don’t you see the casket? Don’t you see the flowers? Don’t you see the mourners dressed in black? There’s no good news to be heard here.” Ah, but there is. And if you would allow me just a few short moments of your time, I am perfectly willing, no, extraordinarily anxious to share it with you.

I would like to lay before you two premises for your consideration this morning, one a statement and the other a question. I present to you the proposition that ‘my father was a good man.’ And then I’d like to follow that up by asking: ‘what about you?’ Perhaps you didn’t hear me. I said, my father was a good man. Oh, yes he was. I say it like that because as a minister, one of our primary functions is to understand people. And we understand, see, that on an occasion like this, when you say something about the departed along the lines of what I just said, there’s usually *somebody* (look at your neighbor and say *somebody*) there’s usually somebody who will say, whether out loud, or under their breath, or to whoever’s sitting next to them, or in their heart of hearts, where no one can hear them but God, there’s usually *somebody* who will say, “oh, no he wasn’t!” Well,

somebody, I'm glad you're here today, because God sent me all the way from New York to Florida to tell *somebody* that my father was a good man!

You see, it's not the preacher's job to put or to send anybody anywhere. Many times, because we don't want to hurt anybody's feelings, we put people in Heaven, and they're not there. Then, because somebody's still mad even though the person has passed on, and because we don't want to rock the boat, and because we're swayed by popular opinion, we put people in hell, and they're not there. But I didn't come here to please anybody but God. Therefore I have to say what God is saying. And I believe in my heart that God is saying that my father was a good man!

Well then, as we look back on the life of Otis Jackson, what was it that made him good? Was it his work ethic? Was it the fact that he was up and out of the house before the sun came up, and didn't return until late at night, sometimes from working two and three jobs, and that he worked almost until the time came that he was no longer able to walk? No, it wasn't that. I mean, that's commendable, that's the measure of a great man, especially in a day and time when there are a lot of men who are three times younger than he was who won't even lift a finger to make a living, let alone go out and work. But no, it wasn't that. That wasn't what made him good. Was it that he, after losing his wife, fed and clothed and housed two small children at a time when he could have been out swinging, he could have been doing his thing, at a time when, I'm pretty sure that many times in the midnight hour, his heart cried out the words of an old Ohio Players tune, "I Wanna Be Free?" No, it's not that either. Was it that he loved music, and that he passed that love on to his children, and that when he broke out his albums, you got a music lesson, and you got a history lesson, and that he could sing those old songs just as well as the best of them? No. It wasn't that. Was it the times he made me read Psalm 23, even though at the time, I didn't have the slightest

idea what it meant? Was it the simple skills that he taught me, things that some young men today have no idea how to do, things that, when I joined the Army, caused me to be ahead of the game? “Don’t leave the house without a crease in your pants.” “Here’s how you’re supposed to hang them up so that they’ll be fit to wear the next time.” “This is how you shine your shoes.” “Whatever you do, try to do it right the first time.” “Pick up your feet and walk like you’re going somewhere.” “Always tell the truth, ’cause the truth is the light.” Oh how I wish he were here to tell some of these young men to pull up their pants! All those things I got from my father. All of those things were good. But none of it *made* him good. Not his serving in the Army in a time of war, nor his ability to cook so good that he could run the church mothers out of the kitchen. None of that made him good. What was it then? What was it that caused God Himself to declare that Otis Jackson was a good man?

I look to God’s own Word for the answer. Second Corinthians chapter five, verse 18, “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” Now in order to clarify that, I would have to direct your attention to Romans 3:23: “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God...” There are those who may have looked at my father’s life and deemed him to be a bad man, nay, the baddest of men, and the chiefest of sinners. But I must tell you that when God, through the prolific pen of the Apostle Paul, says that “...all have sinned...” he means just that. And that means *everybody*. You may not have done some of the stuff that my father did, but all of us did *something*. Therefore, none of us is any better than the other in God’s sight. For I hear David in the Psalms crying out his witness. “Behold”, he says, “for I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.” And then he declares again that there is “...none that doeth good, no, not one.” You say, “yeah, but I don’t steal. I don’t kill. I don’t rape, and I don’t rob. As a matter of fact, I’ve been good all my life. I go to church *every* Sunday. I give to charity. I’ve walked a whole lot of old

ladies across the street in my time.” But I hear God’s answer to all of that in Isaiah 64:6, and it says that “we are all as an unclean thing...and our righteousness is as filthy rags...” Paul picks it up again in Romans the seventh chapter, verse 18, and says “for I know that in me, that is *in my flesh*, dwelleth no good thing.” In other words, Paul had had an encounter with the Lord Jesus, and when he met Jesus, he found out that he wasn’t all that after all. When you meet Jesus, you find out just how bad you really are. You begin to see that for all the good you’ve done, you can’t do enough good to gain the favor of God. In the presence of God, we find out that all of our good works emanate from the flesh, and the flesh is at war with God. The flesh does not like God. The flesh does not want God. The flesh wants to do like Frank Sinatra, and say that “I Did It *My Way!*” But it’s not your way, and it’s not my way! It’s either God’s way, or the highway! Remember that time you bought old Miss Jones some groceries? You had to tell *everybody*. Just couldn’t keep it to yourself. That’s because even though you did a good thing, you did it in the flesh. And outside of Christ, we can’t do anything but be in the flesh. That goes for you, me, everybody. Preachers too.

So then, as I close, how did my father get good? Well, it didn’t happen in his 20’s, when he was full of youth and vigor. It wasn’t even in his 40’s and 50’s, when men have gained a measure of wisdom, yet are still in their prime. No, it was not in his youth, but in the twilight of his life, the end of his days, when he could no longer go out for a walk, and fool himself into thinking that he could walk far enough to get away from God. It was when he was in a position where he could do nothing but lie there...sit there and think about who he was and why he was and how he was, and it was there that he had an encounter with the One who embodied and personified nothing but good.

It was into this scenario that God sent one of His servants, who entered his room and sat down next to the bed, and I can imagine that

she took him by the hands and she began to tell him about the little baby who was born in a manger, born in a town called Bethlehem, and how an angel had come to his mother and told her to call his name JESUS, “for He shall save Otis Jackson, and Harry Jackson, and Eileen West, and Patrick Miller...He shall save His people from...their sins.” I can imagine...that she told my father how that man became a boy, just like he did, and how the boy became a man, and the man had to get up and go to work in the morning, just like he did. How the man got tired, got lonely, got rejected, got hurt, laughed and cried **JUST LIKE HE DID**. “For we have not an High Priest...who is not touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin.” And then, I can imagine that she told him His other name- Immanuel- “God With Us.” And that ‘s when my father began to understand that that man, that man who bled suffered and died, that man who allowed wicked, hateful, sinful men that He had created to drive nails into His hands and feet, pierce Him in His side, put a crown of thorns upon His head, humiliate Him, scorn Him, beat Him, and then kill Him on an old rugged cross, that man who got up on the third day, took the sting out of death, and the victory out of the grave was not just any man, but God Himself, in human flesh, come to communicate to a dying man that there was nothing that he could have done to make Him stop loving him. And I sincerely believe that when that woman of God asked him, “will you accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior?” my father recalled his old military days, when you couldn’t get past the checkpoint without knowing the password! He recognized that there was a way into the presence of God! And when he spoke...even though his voice was feeble...it was a cry...from the depths of his soul: “Yes, Lord!! **YES LORD!!** Yes to your will! Yes to your way! And when any man...says “Yes, Lord!” mercy...has to wrestle justice to the ground, and the Lord Jesus Christ Himself steps up and says, “Let Him on in, Father!! He belongs to me!! I know he was a sinner, but because he believes in me, I took his sin!! I took his dirt!! I took

his mess!! And now...he's a good man! He's a righteous man! He's a SAVED man!

The Bible says "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." And that's what I believe that my father did. Whether or not he meant it is between him ...and God. But I submit to you that if he did, he's with the Lord today. And if he didn't, then he's lost. But before you and I get too smug, let me recall what Jesus said, "except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

So then what about *you*? It's past time for concerning ourselves with my father's eternal destiny. As far as time is concerned, it's over for him. He's in eternity now. But you and I are still here. And today, there's a choice that lies before us. Will we continue to rely upon our self-professed goodness to make us righteous before God, or will we understand that we cannot come before God on our own terms? Do we really want to gamble that our puny human works will save us, or will we accept the free gift of salvation, the righteousness that comes through faith in Christ Jesus? Confess and believe. That is all we have to do. Yes, my father was a good man. Because the instant that he believed, he allowed Jesus to come into his heart, and God *made* him good...

That's the good news...that we no longer have to try to do it on our own... "Come unto me," Jesus says, "all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." As I close, and as we place the final seal upon the book of the life of this man, my father, who is now a part of that great cloud of witnesses spoken of in Hebrews Chapter 12, I declare unto you one final time that my father, because of the mercies of God, was a good man, and again, I ask you, what about *you*?