

The Greatest Gap In Christianity

By Tim Timmons

Announcer

We are just delighted that he was willing to return to the Biola campus and add his balance and insights and fervor for the word of God. A man who is admittedly on top of the piles. The new lean mean 3 miles a day. Tim Timmons, let's greet him because it'll be his final session here.

Tim Timmons

That was 6 miles this morning. Six. If I sit down here in a moment, you understand why. Sorry I missed my session yesterday, but we'll make up for it this morning. Those of you in that session, we're going to have our quiz as I promised, and all of that will be done this morning.

There was a donkey and a lion and a Fox who were out hunting. As they were hunting throughout the forest, they piled up all of their prey into one great big pile. They sat back and rested. The lion said, Mr. Donkey, would you go over and take that big pile and divide it up into three equal piles? One for you, one for me, and one for Mr. Fox. The donkey went over and divided it as carefully as he could. A pile for the lion, a pile for the Fox, and a pile for himself. As he was walking back from his duty, the lion pounced upon him, threw him around, killed him, put all the piles together and threw the donkey on top. He sat back down with the Fox. He said, Mr. Fox, would you go over to that pile and divide it into two equal piles, one for you and one for me.

The Fox went over and took one dead Crow and put it over here in this pile and kept the other pile intact. And he said to the Lion, Mr. Lion, this pile right here is for you and this pile over

here is for me. And he sat down. The lion said to the Fox, he said, Mr. Fox, where did you learn to divide so equally? The Fox said, the donkey taught me.

Isn't it true that most of what we learn is through people playing the part of a donkey? Isn't it true that we even learn more many times when we play the part of a donkey? I'm finding that as I counsel people and I'm working in the Ministry, I'm finding that many Christians are playing the part of donkeys and people don't want to become donkeys. People don't want to look like that.

People don't want to smell like that. People don't want to act like that.

Because many Christians have their noses and their heads completely in a super spiritual trance. And in this super spiritual trance, they're otherworldly. They're so heavenly minded, they're no earthly good. They're not involved in earthly things.

One of the major causes of marital problems today is when a woman trusts the Lord and turns weird, she becomes other than woman. She is now a Christian. As one woman came to see me, she said, I've got a real problem with my husband for the last year and a half. And I said, well, that's incredible. What's happened? She said, I'll tell you what's happened, it all happened when I became a Christian. And I said, of what? She said, a Christian. She kind of sang it, and I'd never heard it in that key before. And so I moved in and I said, what do you mean by a Christian? I don't think I want to be a Christian. I just want to be a Christian. She started telling me some wonderful things that she did. She told me that she didn't want to go to a party with him because they were going to drink there. She would preach to him daily about not drinking. She would tell me how that when her friends came over and lit up on a cigarette, she'd start coughing, hoping they'd get it.

Out using all these super spiritual reasons and all these super spiritual activity. And all it was was a turn off. Can you imagine somebody in the locker room and somebody says something that,

well, they talk in Sunday school language, but they're really not talking about the Lord. They're just talking in anger, and they use some language there that you don't like, and all of a sudden you say, oh, please don't do that. Please. You see, I have Christian ears. Can't you just hear those non believers saying, Boy, I wish I had Christian ears. Wow. Oh to have Christian ears, we become weird all of a sudden, we become so super spiritual that we're not involved in Earth. Now, if the main purpose of the Church was for us to know God completely and that was it, and to know the Bible completely, and that was it, then he would take us on up now. But that's not part of the deal. You see, if our main job was to learn this book and to understand it so completely, and that was all God's purpose was for me to know, then he should take us on up now because they're better teachers up there. Some of those guys wrote this book.

Some of those guys are cool. They could give us some insight into this. I'd love to talk to Moses and find out why he did some things that he did. Like when he said in Genesis two, he says, And God put Adam to sleep and he slept. I want to find out why did you say and he slept? Of course, when God put somebody to sleep, they slept. Why did you add that verse there? And he slept and he really slept? What do you mean by that? It's always bothered me. Nothing big. I just want to ask him.

If the main purpose was for us to have smorts meetings, S-M-O-T-S secret meeting of the Saints, and to only have believers as our friends, then he might as well transfer us on up now. Because all the believers are there. There aren't any non-believers there. There's something more. It is to be knowing the scripture. It is to have relationship with the Saints, but it also is to have relationship with the world. And I believe that many, many Christians are so heavenly minded that they stink here on Earth. It's almost like they've already died here and they're already living there.

There's something very wrong with that. We get so nonrelevant. I told a story in the first session of my seminar this week, and I think I'll use it here because it helps us in this relevance idea. We don't relate well to the Earth because we're so super spiritual in our actions and our talk and what we say and how we act and what we believe, what we think and what we allow other people to think.

One man was teaching a Sunday school class of 6th grade boys. He was always asking them questions as he began the class. And he would get them to come through with this quiz every week. And they knew that they had to come up with the right biblical answer. But he went to a seminar over the week. He went to a Christian education seminar put on by the Christian Education Department of Biola. And he went there and they told him, get into some other things. All truth is God's truth. Don't just have him put a verse to everything that you ask them. And so he thought, I'm going to think of something new.

And he came into the class and he said, what is Gray and bushy and has a tail, climbs trees and eats nuts. And these kids were racking their brains to figure out what in the world is he talking about? Now, where is that in the Bible? And they're poking the real bright ones over here who know the Bible books frontwards and backwards and they couldn't figure it out. He said, Come on, what's Gray bushy has a tail, climbs trees, and eats nuts. And they couldn't figure it out. They were just, Gee whiz, how do you come up with a biblical answer for this? Finally calls on a guy in the back and says, Bobby, come on, you know this. I'm sure you do. It's different from what I normally say in this class. I want a different answer. It's a whole new approach.

I've been to the CE conference. What is bushy and Gray and has a tail, climbs trees and eats nuts? And the kid says, okay, I'm going to say Jesus, but I really think it's a squirrel. That's how

far apart we are. We're so far apart in that we're not talking into people's languages. And therefore, I don't think we're making a dent in society as well as our growth with Jesus Christ. Turn with me to a very, very familiar passage, Romans, chapter Twelve. In the Book of Romans. I want to take a little different angle to this section that's so familiar, and I hope you get my point. I am not going to spend all the time covering what you already know in the Book of Romans in Romans chapter twelve. But I want to take a little different angle to what you do know to try to give you a little different perspective on why this book was written in the first place.

I heard a teacher state a year ago, about eight or nine years ago, before I moved out here. He got up before a group of people, and he said that the Bible does not have any Commandments for us, nothing for us to do. Well, we all perked up on that one, because if he could get us off that hook, we're in there. And then he went on to explain, all you must do is submit to the Holy Spirit and the Spirit then will follow these commands. Now that is simple. That's all right, baby. He'll get me up in the morning. He will read the Bible for me. He will do all these wonderful things. I'm so excited about this.

If that is true, then why did the Holy Spirit write a book for himself? Why did I study seven years of Greek and three and a half years of Hebrew? Why did you come here to go to school? Why do you take Bible courses? There's a heavy emphasis in here on what I am to do. And the Book of Romans is no exception. In the first three chapters of the book, it says that everybody is in a heap of trouble, people with the Bible. And without the Bible, everybody is in a heap of trouble. Everybody is without excuse.

And then in chapter four, he says that you can come into a relationship with God by your faith in God's, revelation, just as Abraham did. And then in chapters five, six, seven and eight, he says,

little interesting package there. In chapter five, he says, you have a new past, just as if you've never sinned. Justification. In chapter six, he says, you've got a new position in him. You're dead to sin and alive to God. In chapter seven, he says he gets us right down into earthly things. You notice this? He says, that which I wanted to do, I didn't do. And after I did it, I wonder why I did. Sounds like he's confused, but he's talking about real life. He's talking about right here. That the things that I really want to do, I don't do. Why is that? And the things that I really want in life and the things I want to do for God. I don't seem to have this motivation to follow through. I want to do it, but I don't seem to get it done. And he's grappling with the struggle. And then he says in chapter eight, that because you have a new relationship with God, you have a new partner.

And that partner is the Holy Spirit. And his spirit bears witness with my spirit that I'm a child of God. And he leads me toward life no matter what my behavior is. He continued leading me toward life, and he continues to take even the bad behavior and use that to turn me around. I find that when I blow it, that's when God seems to come into my life in such an unusual way and throw buckets of Grace all over me. And I feel so horrible about what I did that I grow another inch or so.

It's because God has a stubborn will of continually moving us toward being like his son. He sets all that up and he gets to nine ten eleven, dealing primarily with the Jewish remnants and Jewish people. But in chapter twelve, he sets all that up now to come to this pivot. We know this is a pivot, but why is he doing this? Why is chapter twelve here? I think he's trying to do something. Listen carefully. He's trying to make the Heaven to Earth connection, and he wants you to make the Heaven to Earth connection.

Let's look at it now in light of this Heaven to Earth connection. You see, I think some people keep their eyes so fixed on heaven that they never look at the Earth and they end up stumbling into hell. They get so messed up this way, stumbling over stuff down here, they don't know what they're doing. That's why I think a lot of people are going to say, Lord, Lord. At the end, he says, I don't know who you are. They've been so busy saying, Lord, Lord. They didn't say, who am I walking with? Who are you? What is your Christian name?

What membership do you have? When were you baptized? When were you filled? When did you get it? Do you got it? The Heaven to Earth connection. Verse one, I urge you, therefore, brethren and sisterin, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and Holy sacrifice acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. He gives us four steps to make the Heaven to Earth connection. I'm convinced this is the way to find your giftedness. I think this is the way that you can use on Earth. It's the way to find the will of God that you can follow on Earth.

These four steps are the Heaven to Earth connection. When we see them that way, we realize how vital they are. He says, I beseech you, therefore, by the mercies of God, because of what God has done for you. Now get your act together. And his first step is offer your body to God. Offer your body to God. I was reading this with my kids a few weeks ago, just before Christmas. We were in Romans in the early morning, and we got to this part and I said, God wants your body as a living sacrifice.

And one of my girls said, you mean like the sacrifices in the Old Testament? I said, Just like them. No, my son says, Just like them? I said, what do you mean? He said, dad. I said, no, that's the whole point. He wants us alive, a living sacrifice, but with the same kind of commitment of offering our life to God. The only problem with live offerings as they continue crawling off the

altar when it gets hot and most of us get on the altar with 1 foot on the side. Right. Just kind of an escape hatch. Certainly, I will do what you want me to do, but.

Offer your body to God. And what's interesting, he says, I urge you, therefore, brethren, by the mercy of God, because of what God has done for you, to offer your bodies a living and Holy sacrifice acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship through some archeological discoveries in the last few years, this phrase is an interesting technical phrase. It's the kind of thing that's talking about your spiritual worship or your liturgy, that this is your liturgy. Now, most of us are not involved in churches that have liturgies.

And yet what he's saying here is here is a primary liturgy for you, that you offer your body as a sacrifice to God and say, God, I want you to use me. And that's part of our liturgy of saying, I want to walk with God, I want to be used by God. Okay? Now, I did this when I was growing up. I offered my body to God 43 times. I came down center aisles as they hummed just as I am, for the 14th verse, I came down side aisles. I came from the balcony thinking that if I went longer, that would be better. I made sin lists at camp and burnt those sin lists. I threw faggots in the fire. I have done everything. I have touched the fire myself. Nothing seemed to work. Because I didn't read far enough.

Part of the heaven to Earth connection demands that I only not only offer my body to God, but secondly, look what it says in verse two. And that's a very important word for those of us who are English majors. Right? And that means something before and something afterwards. And don't be conformed or fit into the box of this world, but be transformed, totally renewed on the inside out by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

I didn't understand that what he wanted from me is not only offer my body, but he wanted me to overhaul my mind. That's the second step of the heaven to Earth connection. And it's a vital commitment that's linked with the first one. These first two are linked vitally together. He wants me to overhaul my mind with what? With his word, with his truth, with his principles, with who he is. He wants us to overhaul our mind that we may put to the test what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. He doesn't want me in a box. He doesn't want me on a treadmill of performance. He wants me to be constantly involved in change, being changed and renewed by our minds. In our minds. The power of the mind is so unbelievable what you can do with it. And God says, I want you to have the mind of Christ. I want you to have my mind. I want you to be constantly being changed in your mind. Overhauled in your mind by my word. Let me ask you something. You've offered your body. I know you have. You wouldn't be here. You probably offered it more than 43 times. Every other Chapel service. You say, oh, good. Heavy. I'll take that. Okay, God, you got me again. I'm back in. I'm back in the deal this week. But what are you doing to overhaul your mind? Other than studying for the exam, what are you doing other than filling up your notebook to renew your mind? I got very hooked into this because I had memorized verses out of context for years. I was wonderful at that. Then I heard a guy speak on how you ought to meditate on the scripture and you ought to spend time with total context of scripture and that if you do this, that God will begin to change your personality. And I thought, that's a super idea. I needed some changing. And so I got involved in meditating. He also had talked about how that you had to give up things over to the Lord, the material things that are causing irritations and hardships in your life. He illustrated with his car. Well, nobody messed with my car. My car is my car. I had a 1968 Buick Skylark. It was absolutely beautiful, brand new.

I just got out of seminary, and that's pretty big time for being out of seminary. New Buick Scholar, big time. Just before I took the Valor of poverty. It's my last fling. If anybody touched my car, I messed with my car. I messed with them. I had a bad reputation about my car. If my wife took it to get the groceries, she would come back, park it. I'd come out and help her with the groceries, go out and look to see if she had any dings in it. I always told her, park it at the end of the parking lot. Never park next to anybody. I think it's a little much to take over two places, but get to the complete end of the parking lot. Then you're better off. Anybody mess with the car. I messed with that. I started meditating. I meditated on James One, which is not a good place to start. It says, Count it all joy. My brother. When you encounter various trials knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.

Okay, so we took off to LAX, to pick up some people. And as we picked up some people there, we got everybody in the car. And I started to take off in the car. Hadn't turned the car on yet. And a guy in a red Corvette started backing up toward my car. And I had given my car over to God. I said, God, this is your car. I will thank you for the privilege of using your car. I am thrilled about your car, but I will not get ticked about your car anymore. If anybody wants to put a Ding in, they put a Ding in. I'm not going to mess with it anymore, because I have too much trouble there. Here comes a guy with a red corevette coming back toward my door. When you see somebody doing that, you think he's not going to come back into my door. There's no fool that would do that. And just as I thought that, he gunned it right into my door.

Here we are all sitting there. I began to move into rage and wanted to get out and do something harmful. And just as I started that thinking, a sign came in my mind's eye. When you encounter various trials counted all joy knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. Signed, God. That calmed me down a little bit. And I got out of the car. I didn't get out of this side. This

door would not open. I went over here. The guy had pulled up in front of me. He is now cussing me out, telling me off, really ringing me out, telling me that I ran into him, and I was trying to explain to him that I didn't have the car even turned on. And when my car is turned on, it only goes frontwards and backwards. It does not go sideways.

He didn't have insurance, didn't have a license. He took off. There I was. I thought, God, you are messing around with your car. We went on a camping trip, and we took off with another couple right up the coast. We put a carrier on top of God's car there. And we got to the first camp site. And my friend was right there on the passenger side, pulling down the tent and the sleeping bag and a charcoal grill. But he didn't have a hold of the charcoal grill. And the charcoal grill came down on the right hand on passenger side there and made it a beautiful design right there on that door.

And I was about 10ft behind him, watching all this happen. And as it happened, I started to move into that little rage again. And that sign appeared in my eyes. Signed God. And then I said, that's okay, Dick, don't worry about it, it's just a car. And I couldn't figure out who said that. We walked on the beach later, and my wife said that was weird. I said, what's that? She said, your behavior toward Dick, you normally would have killed the guy. You have attempted murder on my life for a ding. And he goes and takes the whole right door and you say, it's okay, Dick.

Well, I liked it too because I wasn't out to kill anybody anymore and I wasn't upset about it. I really wasn't. Things were changing in my heart because I'd been renewing my mind and I really liked that idea. Later on, about three months later, we still hadn't fixed anything because we had taken the vow of poverty. And there we were back in Dallas, and I was going down the one way street and I was on the left hand side of one way street, two lanes. And this guy on the right hand Lane was going to take a left hand turn, but he was going to have to go through me to do it.

And he did. He made the left hand turn, hit my right back Fender, turned me completely around in there. And I thought I've been through this lesson before. I've taken this before. This is unusual, too. I already have passed the course. And now they're putting another exam on me. And so I started to get a little bit upset. All of a sudden this crazy thing when you encounter various trials counted all joy. And I asked myself, is this a various trial? It was. And I got out and I was able to help this guy. And I was calm and everything was cool. But God's car is getting worse and worse.

That same day, same day I was trying to get on Dallas central Expressway. If you've ever been to Dallas, you realize that in Dallas central Expressway, there are no entrances onto the Expressway. There are shoots, there are launching pads, but there are no entrances. I'm convinced that's what started the Bible belt. People pray a lot there as they get onto central Expressway. A guy in front of me, it was raining a little bit. And in Dallas, when it rains, people get nervous and they slide around.

A guy in front of me from Thailand was with the first National Bank car and he took off and his wheels started spinning and scared him and stopped at the end of the shoot. Well, I didn't know that. I'm still in the shoot looking back here to see who's coming. By. Now any dummy had been downtown. And so I'm sitting here and I gunned it and all of a sudden I hit something. And I didn't know what it was because my hood flew up like this. I couldn't see a thing. I looked over here, there was a curb. I looked over here, here's a curb. And I'm thinking, I have hit something in the middle of the street. I got out of the car and here's this guy holding his neck, talking in Thai. And I realized I was glad I didn't know what he was saying. And he was pretty upset. It was a bad scene. The policeman came, looked over the scene. He looked at my car and he said,

Is this your car right here? Well, I didn't have the heart to say no. Actually, I've turned that over to God because I knew he'd give me the breath test at this point.

But I said, yeah, that's the one. The one with the hood in the air. That's mine. It's seven wrecks in the same place just before my wreck. And so we bent the hood down, tied it with a wire, and he let me go home. I drove home in front of an apartment building where we lived. And Carol said, why are you home so soon? I said, Well, I parked the car so she could see it all. I said, look out the window. She looked out the window, and there, of course, is our rusted door over here. And then the beautiful design on the right hand side, a new wrinkle in the back right Fender she hadn't seen yet. And the hood sitting there like this.

I never will forget what she said. She said, you know, God seems to still be teaching you something. Hey, I got hooked on something there. I got hooked on meditating on the scripture. I got hooked on the fact that God can change attitudes and God can change personalities. I use it in counseling by getting people involved in meditating. When they're fearful, give them something to meditate on.

Don't give it to them as a band aid and say, Read this verse. It'll help you someday. But get in there and have them read it and meditate it and think about it and write out things about it all week long and ask God to do something in their life that looks like that passage that's being transformed. Now those two are talking about our commitment to God in this heaven to Earth connection.

He gives us two more. They're talking more about our community relationships, our horizontal relationships. The first two are more on our vertical. These are horizontal. He says, for through the Grace given to me, I say to every man among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think, but to think so as to have sound judgment as God is allowed it to each a measure

of faith. He introduces the concept here that he's alluded to already. When he says the mercies of God, he says, for through the Grace given to me, there's something that most seminaries in Bible colleges and Christian colleges don't seem to understand. It's called grace. Because in this kind of context, we spend so much time in the theoretical and so much time on the ideal.

I've been here and I had it all figured out how life was supposed to work and how if you gave them this, that would do it and if you give them this, that will do it. And this is how the Christian life is to be lived. And when a person comes in and they've had a pretty raunchy life, or let's just say they've been living together and they're coming in for marriage, I'll tell you what I do with them. There's the door, my friend. I said that once.

There's something, we're missing it's again. What we think that the non believers are out here on that dark horse lame and we're on the stallion over here and we got it made. There's something that we're missing when we start putting that great separation and we forget the grace of God that we have and that we own.

I said that once. There's something, we're missing it's again. What we think that the non believers are out here on that dark horse lame and we're on the stallion over here and we got it made.

There's something that we're missing when we start putting that great separation and we forget the Grace of God that we have and that we own.

A great illustration of Grace that I heard not long ago that I love. Let's imagine that you're on a ship and you're out there on the ship and you're between the West Coast and Hawaii and you're right in the middle. You're about 1000 miles from shore in any direction. And at dinner, a friend of yours at the table says, let's go over and I'd like to go on outside here on the deck and take a picture of you four people. And so you say, okay, well, let's go out. What you don't realize is that he has greased the deck and he has also removed the railing and he's asked you to stand out there

and back up a little bit. No, wait, I can't get info. Could you step back just a little further? And finally you step back far enough that you are in the ocean. Okay?

Now at this point, as he's wiping the grease off and you're in the water looking up and he puts the railing back, you realize this guy wasn't your friend after all. It didn't take long, but you're beginning to get the picture and he waves at you and he goes back to dinner, finishes his dinner, and now you four are out in the middle of the ocean, 1000 miles from shore. No way to get back. Now it's impossible to make it. There's no way to get there. Some of you have been exercising. You think I'm swimming? You I told you guys you should have been running, huh? If you dun run, you could make it. I'm going on. He takes off swimming away, but he ain't going to make it. Other people are angry because it's happening. Other people are sitting there praying. Some have their idols and everybody is out there in a mess and there's no way out. The only way out is if God builds a bridge from shore to you. And that's exactly what he's done. We were that far away. We had no way out. There's nothing we could do on our own. We cannot get to heaven. You can only jump to heaven on a six foot ladder. You only get 6ft. You can't get there. We were that desperate. And God offers his Grace to us as raunchy as we were and as raunchy as we still are. How many of you are raunchy? Just a few of us. We in the Ministry aren't. But those of you still in school, that's Grace.

We don't deserve it. There's no way we can merit it. There's nothing we could do to get it. And God gives it to us. And he says, for through the Grace given to me, I say to every man among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think, but to think so as to have sound judgment, realistic thinking, as God has allotted each and measure of faith. Offer the body.

Overhaul the mind. I call this one. Obtain a servant's heart. Obtain a servant's heart. I'm really beginning to get the picture the longer I live of how little difference there is between me and a

non-believer. And basically, it comes down to the Grace of God. It comes down to the Grace of God and how I've responded to it. And what he's saying here is, accept the fact that you have your own frailties. Don't try to act like you're more hot than you are. Don't try to act like you know something when you don't. Don't try to put some airs on like you've got it. Don't do that. Don't fake it. Don't fake it.

The new lawyer went into business and he went down. He got his office and he had the only office at the end of this hall. And he wanted to get all kinds of now that he's paying rent, he wanted to make sure that he had everybody coming to his door so he could pay his bills. And he heard some footsteps coming down the hallway. And immediately he got tile straightened up Saturday's desk and picked the phone up and started talking. Yes, yes. Oh, sure. Hey, look, I can handle that Corporation scene. There's no problem whatsoever. I can do it and I can handle it swiftly. Oh, yeah. Hey, we got a small office, but I've handled that. I've done that kind of thing before. Not any problem whatsoever. And this other guy now is coming down the hall, and he stands right there in the doorway as this guy is still talking. He says, oh, yes, I've handled at least 50 of those. Yeah. Oh, no, nothing's too big and nothing's too small. No, I can handle that either. Oh, yeah. I can do either one of those. That's good. Hey, great. Hey. Okay, hold on just a second. Yeah.

And the guy at the door says, Hi. My name is Lou. I'm with a telephone company and I've come to connect your phone. That's the way a lot of people fake it in Christianity, isn't it? We're walking around got our line? Yeah, just me and God? Yeah, we're talking and it's been clogged for years. Your bill hasn't been paid up for centuries.

Obtain a servant's heart. Accept your own frailty. You're not a Super Christian. The power that you have is that Jesus Christ has the power and you know him. Obtain a servant's heart? Offer

your body, overhaul your mind? Obtain a servant's heart? As you approach people I found that the most obnoxious people out there many times are the people that God uses to teach me things. And that makes me Mad.