

The Victorious Christian Life

Sermon 2: The First Works

Well, last time I was up here, we looked at the church of Ephesus, the letter that the Lord wrote to them, and talked about the first works and the first love. This is kind of a continuation of that because we never really got to the first works, so we're just going to continue on. So when I read this first scripture, don't think I'm going to preach the same sermon again. I wouldn't do that to you.

Let's pray.

Dear Heavenly Father, we thank Thee that faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. And I pray for all here today that You would give us a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of You. Let the eyes of our understanding be enlightened. Let us have wisdom to understand and hear Your Word.

In the Name of the Lord Jesus. Amen.

Revelations 2:1

"To the angel of the church of Ephesus, write, I know your works, your labor, your patience, and you have persevered and have patience and have labored for my name's sake, and have not become weary. Nevertheless, I have this against you, that you have left your first love. Remember, therefore, from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works."

Now, Jesus is kind of focused on this first works. As if doing these first works will fix the first problem—that you've forsaken your first love. And it does exactly that, but it's going to take us a minute to get through it and to it. You notice it says "works." It's plural. There's more than one work that we have to do. But we do have first works, and these are things that have to be accomplished in our lives. And it kind of goes along with the pastor's sermon last week about setting your spiritual house in order, and that's exactly what it is.

Of course, the very first work is God's work, and He initiates that in our lives. And this has nothing to do with that. This is His work that He does. It's always the first work in our hearts, and that's our first love.

Revelation 3:20

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come into him and dine with him, and he with Me."

So, in reality, that is our first work—is when He knocks, open the door. Now He's talking about coming in and having supper with you. But the good news is, is when Jesus comes for supper, He brings the meal. (Amen). All you have to do is open up and give Him that place in your heart to sit.

And this meal that He brings is in Matthew 26:26.

Matthew 26:26

"And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed it, and broke it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, 'Take, eat; this is My body.' Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.'"

This is the very first work—Christ as High Priest entering the temple of your heart with the communion of His crucified Body and Blood, thus reconciling you to God as He sits as High Priest upon the throne of your heart as an atonement for sins. This is THE first work which God initiates in anyone's life, and by this, you are born again.

Revelation 1:5

"And from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father; to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen."

(NOTE: a kingdom of priests? Is this a different version?)

When Christ enters your heart as High Priest with His blood, you are born again from the dead, and you become a priest unto God. He makes you a priest. And as a priest, you have a service to perform, and it is called the "first works". It's kind of hard to do the first works if you don't know what they are, but fortunately, the Lord has clearly shown us in the scriptures, and you're going to find them in Romans 12:1-2.

Romans 12:1

"I urge you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship."

As a priest, one of your first works is your spiritual service of worship—is to present your body a living, holy sacrifice because He says you are dead, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. The life that you now live, you live in Christ. (Amen). And this is the very first work that you do.

Then the second is:

Romans 12:2

"And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is—that which is good, acceptable, and perfect."

Now, to fully understand these verses, we're going to have to take a side journey. It's very important, but it's going to lead us full circle, all the way around, back to our scriptures we just read in Romans.

The name of this side journey is called "Types and Shadows". Has anyone ever heard that term in Bible teaching? Well, it's extremely important. It's not just a sideline; it is very important. By the time we get done today, we're going to know what types and shadows are and how important they are for us understanding the New Testament.

A type and shadow in the scriptures is a person or thing in the Old Testament that foreshadows a person or thing in the New Testament. It is a natural representation or symbol from the Old Testament that teaches us the truth of a spiritual reality in the New Testament.

Now the entire Old Testament is permeated with these types and shadows. So amazing is it that it proves that God wrote the Bible, because it's beyond coincidence. I'm going to give you a few examples, and we're going to have a little side journey of types and shadows so that you can understand the rest of the message.

Adam was the first man. Jesus is called the second man. This is a pattern. Adam sinned and was rejected. Jesus was obedient and was accepted. Adam, the first man, rejected; Jesus, the second man, accepted. Now this pattern goes all through Scripture.

Cain and Abel, Adam's two sons—Cain was first, Abel was second. Cain was a farmer. Adam was a farmer. Abel was a shepherd. Jesus was a shepherd. Adam, the first son, sinned. He brought the work of his own hand and the sweat of his own brow and presented it to God as a sacrifice, and God rejected it. Abel brought a lamb and its blood as a sacrifice, and he was accepted. You see the pattern? Cain was rejected; Abel was accepted. Cain was a farmer; Abel was a shepherd. Adam was a farmer; Jesus was a shepherd. It goes on and on.

Abraham had two sons. The first son—

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Note: The transcription service or AI completely took this out for some reason so I transcribed this by hand.

He, he was waiting for the promise that God had gave him that “Your progeny will be like the sand of the sea and the stars of heaven”. Yet here he was 75 years old when God made him this promise, and his wife was barren and she couldn’t have any children at that time. And uh. After a period of time went by they were waiting and thinking, “Well, I think we’re gonna have to help God out” and uh. I guess it was a custom at that time that the wife could give her handmaiden to her husband to bear a child for them. So, that’s what they did. They come up with a good idea. Um. We’ll give Hagar my Egyptian servant to Abraham and he’ll bear a child, and they did; first try it seems.

But anyhow they bore Ishmael. And Ishmael was the work of Abraham’s flesh. I mean it was his idea. But God said no, not Ishmael. But Sarah your wife will bear a child. And Abraham’s like she’s 90 years old. Now I’m 100 and I’m dead. He said “Abraham, Sarah will bear you a child.” And it came to pass. They had Isaac—

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So, the first son of Abraham was Ishmael, born of the flesh. He was rejected. Isaac was born by promise and miraculously, and he was accepted. First man's rejected; second man's accepted.

Isaac had two sons, Esau and Jacob. Esau was the first son; Jacob was the second son. Esau had the birthright, but one day, when he came in from hunting, he was so hungry, he said, "I'm going to starve to death." And Jacob was making a big pot of stew, and he said, "Give me some of the stew." Jacob, being the cunning guy that he was, said, "No, not so, but I'll give you a bowl

of soup if you give me the birthright." And Esau despised his birthright and traded the birthright for his appetite. Now, keep that in mind, because that's what the first man always does—the fleshly man. So Esau, having done this, was rejected, and Jacob, the second man, spiritual, was accepted. This is a pattern. You can see it.

I'm only going to give you one more: the first generation of the children come out of Egypt. Now, this group had the Passover lamb. The blood was put on the door(posts) of their homes. They ate the Passover lamb, now that's a type and shadow of our salvation—That's Jesus giving His blood for us. And When that blood was applied, the death angel had to pass them by and could not enter in. This first generation came delivered out of Egypt and was baptized in the Red Sea. That sound familiar? Our salvation again.

And then, 50 days later, they came to Mount Sinai—which is Pentecost—and they received the law. But do you know, and then God brought them right to the borders of the promised land that He said, "I'm going to give you this land," And they stood there at that land and they sent in spies? Ten of the twelve spies came back and said, "Forget it. We can't do it. There are giants in the land, the cities are walled, and we can't do it. And we look like grasshoppers in their sight." And all the children of Israel cried out, moaned, and cried. They was talking about Moses, saying, "We would have been better off to stay in Egypt." And God rejected that whole generation. They had received the Passover lamb, they got the blood, they were baptized, they received the law from heaven, but they were rejected by God. The first generation out of Egypt was rejected, and the second generation went in and possessed the promised land.

What is the New Testament reality of this pattern? Well before you're born again, you're the old man, and after you're born again, you're the new man. In 1 Corinthians 15:22, it says,

1 Corinthians 15:22

"For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."

(Amen). That's the spiritual reality of it, and that's why He is continually saying, "Put off that old man," because you still have a little bit of work to do. We'll get to that. "Put on the new man," which is Christ.

This brings us, and I said all that to say this, it brings us to a very important type and shadow that is directly related to our first works.

Hebrews 10:1

"For the law being a foreshadow of good things to come..."

...Now, the law is the Old Testament, so it says it flat out right here in the Bible, it's a foreshadow of things to come. And we can kind of see from these patterns. But there are so many of them. If I sat and told you all of them, I think everyone would get saved because it's just impossible that the book couldn't have been written by God.

Hebrews 10:1

"For the law being a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices, which they offered continually, year by year, make the worshippers perfect."

Now, I want you to focus on that: they made these sacrifices continually, year by year. He's talking about the high priest, where he would enter in once with the blood of the lamb, every year. They continually offered this sacrifice. He's saying that's a foreshadow of good things to come.

"But it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins."

But Christ came. That was the foreshadow. Here comes the New Testament reality:

"But Christ came as a High Priest of the good things to come,"

Remember it says the law is a foreshadow of good things to come. Well then it says:

Hebrews 9:11-12

"But Christ came as a High Priest of the good things to come, and with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood, He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption."

He says it's "a more perfect tabernacle." Has anyone ever heard the term "Tabernacle," the tabernacle in the wilderness that the children of Israel made? Well, that's what we're going to talk about today. You see, these blood sacrifices foreshadowed Christ as our High Priest

entering into the Most Holy Place of the Tabernacle and offering His own blood once for our sins.

Now let's talk about this tabernacle. Believe me, I'm going someplace with all of this. We're going to get back to Romans 12:1-2, the first works.

This tabernacle is a tent. "Tabernacle" is an old English word for "tent," and it was a tent made of skins in Exodus. God was very, very specific with Moses. Moses went up onto the mountain for 40 days. When he came down, he did not just come down with the Ten Commandments like the movies show us. He came down with every book that he wrote. He wrote five books, and everything that was in the law, those books, he came down with. Also, he received the blueprint of how to build this Tabernacle, and God was very serious about it the way he lays it out.

In Exodus 25:8, it says:

Exodus 25:8

"Let them make Me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them, according to all that I show you, that is, the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furnishings; just so you shall make it."

God gave Him the blueprint. He was very specific. "You must make it exactly like I said."

Now, I want you to understand that this tabernacle, this tent, is a type and shadow of the New Covenant temple of God. It is the Body of Christ corporately, and the Body of Christ individually. Our individual bodies are this tabernacle. It represents it, so there's much to learn from the Old Testament about what's to be done in the New Testament.

Here's a picture of the tabernacle, or at least an artist's rendition.

[image]

So, I'm just going to describe a couple of things that we see on the outside. This is a curtain wall so that no one on the outside could see what was going on inside. Now, just so you know, this is us. This is your body.

There's no psychiatrist that's ever got it right about what's going on inside us, but God's got it down. Believe me, you're going to find that out. Amen.

So, this curtain wall represents your outer life. There's the gate, there's the Brazen Altar, and that's the Laver, and this is the inner person, or the inner tabernacle, which is divided into two sections. We'll get to that.

Your salvation is represented here. Jesus Christ is the gate. When you come to this gate, the first thing He shows you is this Brazen Altar. That's the cross. (Amen). That's the sacrifice for sins. That's what it was called then. Then, if you receive that sacrifice for sins, what's the next thing you run to? The laver, a big bowl (basin) of water. That's baptism. Then, when that takes place, you can enter into the inside.

I want to talk about this tent of flesh for a minute. David was obsessed with building a temple for God. If you read back in, I think it's Kings, he laid up immense wealth of timber, gold, silver, and on and on for the building of the temple of God. He wanted to build the temple of God, and he just wanted to give God a temple.

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Transcriber's Note:

- 2 Samuel 7:1-2 - David first expresses his desire to build a temple for the Lord.
- 1 Chronicles 22:14 - David gathers large quantities of gold, silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone for the temple.
- 1 Chronicles 28:11-19 - David gives Solomon detailed plans for the temple, including materials gathered.
- 1 Chronicles 29:2-5 - David lists materials he collected: gold, silver, bronze, iron, wood, and precious stones.
- 1 Kings 7:51 - Solomon brings in items David dedicated to the temple.

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Here in Samuel, it talks about David expressing this desire. It says in **2 Samuel 7:1-7**:

2 Samuel 7:1-7:

"Now it came to pass, when King David was dwelling in his house, and the Lord had given him rest from all his enemies all around, that the king said to Nathan the prophet, 'See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells inside tent curtains.'

Then Nathan said to the king, 'Go, do all that is in your heart, for the Lord is with you.'

But it happened that night that the word of the Lord came to Nathan, saying, 'Go tell My servant David, "Thus says the Lord: Would you build a house for Me to dwell in? For I have not dwelt in a house since the time I brought the children of Israel up from Egypt, even to this day, but have moved about in a tent. Wherever I have moved about with all the children of Israel, have I ever spoken a word to anyone from the tribes of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd My people, saying, 'Why have you not built Me a house of cedar?'"'

Exodus 29:45 says:

"I will dwell among the children of Israel and will be their God."

Now, this tells us a whole lot. That is a tent of skins, and that represents us. And God says I don't want you to build Me a palace. I want to move around with 'em. I want to go wherever they're going. I want to dwell in them and move in them. And this is a type and shadow of what He wants to do in our lives. He wants to live in you and move around and take part in your life with you. And when we come together, to be among us. And this has all been done to teach us this lesson.

So now let's go inside the tent. Every psychiatrist should have to take this lesson; then they would actually know what's going on in there. So this is the inside, and it's divided into two parts. The first part has the lampstand, the shewbread, and the altar of incense. Then here's that veil you've always heard about being ripped when Jesus was crucified. But within that veil is the Ark of the Covenant, which has the cherubim covering it, and then the mercy seat. And then there's stuff inside too. Inside are the law of God and a few other things. But that mercy seat right there—what a lot of people don't know is that this first section is your soul, which is your will, your intellect, and your emotions. And this second section is your heart, which is where I keep talking about Jesus wants to dwell, in your heart.

What a lot of people don't know about the Ark, and they didn't cover it in Indiana Jones, was that the Ark is a type and shadow of your heart, and it's also the throne of God. That Ark is the throne of God, and on top of it, they call it the mercy seat. Have you ever heard that? That's where the high priest would go once a year with the blood, and he would put it on the top of that Ark right there, before God, and that atoned for the sins of the people for the whole year. Well, that throne of God is not really called a mercy seat; it's a judgment seat. That is the throne of

God, and for sinful man, it's a judgment seat. But when the high priest would go and put the blood there, it became a mercy seat, a propitiation for your sin, an atonement for your sin. This is inside you, and He did all of this so you know what was going on.

Real quickly, we're going to get to the first works because...

Let me read this.

So we described the parts. Hebrews 9:1-3 says:

Hebrews 9:1-3

"Then indeed, even the first covenant had ordinances of divine service and the earthly sanctuary. For a tabernacle was prepared: the first part, in which was the lampstand, the table, and the showbread, which is called the sanctuary; and behind the second veil, the part of the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of All"

Now, that's your heart. That's why it cannot be polluted with the things of the world. Remember, if anyone read the last lesson, we talked about how John the Baptist cried out at the first coming of the Lord. He says,

John 1:23

He said: "I am

'The voice of one crying in the wilderness:

"Make straight the way of the Lord," '

as the prophet Isaiah said."

He was saying, "Clear the way. Get all that stuff out of your heart because the Lord's coming." Well, let me tell you something—He's doing the same thing before He comes again because He's coming. He's coming for a bride that's without blemish, spot, or wrinkle. And this is our job, to do these first works.

Hebrews 9:4-5 says:

"Behind the second veil, the part of the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of All, which had the Ark of the Covenant overlaid on all sides with gold, in which were the golden pot that had

the manna, Aaron's rod that budded, and the tablets of the covenant (written with the finger of God); and above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat."

Sidebar:

Now that's all supposed to be in your heart, you know it says the law is in your heart. He says "I'll put My laws in their heart", that's why He put the tablets in the Ark because it represents your heart. And the throne of God. Remember that! The ark represents the throne of God, but it also represents your heart. Where does God want to sit enthroned? This is his temple. We're His temple, it's our heart. That's why He says "You have forsaken the first love" Well the first love's gotta be Jesus. He's gotta be sitting there on the throne. Could you imagine if we could really see what we've piled on that ark? I have a lot of crazy stuff up there. (Laughter). I mean, just.. You know? It could be anything. We've all done that, and that's the Devil's design. If he can just get one thing else up there, he's succeeded. It says:

Hebrews 9:6

"Now when these things had been thus prepared, the priests always went into the first part of the tabernacle performing the services."

Now do you remember back in Romans, it said:

Romans 12:1

"Present your bodies a living sacrifice, which is your spiritual service of worship."

And that you are priests? Well, you see, the priests had a job to do—the common priests, not just the high priest. There were many common priests and one High Priest. Those common priests represent us after we're born again, and the High Priest is Jesus. He alone can go in and do that perfect work, but we've got a job to do here.

Hebrews 9:7 continues:

"But into the second part, the high priest went alone once a year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and for the people's sins."

Hebrews 9:9

"It was symbolic for the present time in which both gifts and sacrifices are offered, which cannot make him who performed the service perfect."

It's just symbolic. You see, in the Old Testament, God acted out over 4,000 years on the stage of humanity's history, real people in real lives. He acted out all the spiritual truths of the New Covenant so that when the New Covenant came, we could understand.

Now we're back to **Romans 12:1**:

"I urge you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship."

Why would He say this?

Because if Jesus is enthroned upon your heart as High Priest and King with His blood, then you are the New Covenant temple of God, and you are now a priest of the sanctuary

Which is the first part.

The second verse details your priestly service. Here's your service! Here's the works:

Romans 12:2

"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good, acceptable, and perfect."

1 Thessalonians 5:23 says:

"Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

This is all talking about our works, our first works. He says "the good, acceptable, and perfect will of God." And here he says "the spirit, soul, and body." That's exactly what it is.

This is the outer court, representing our bodies, our lives, and our flesh out here. It's the good work. This is the good will of God that we have done all of this, and we're presenting our bodies as living sacrifices. But it's the good work. Then we move inside for the first section, for the acceptable work. And that is the work that goes on here. The perfect work, the perfect will of

God, is having received the blood of Jesus into your heart. You see, we're moving toward heaven.

But there's a practical work. And I'm going to wrap this up because, to really teach the tabernacle, and it's such an intense type and shadow, it would take at least four one-hour lessons, and I know we're not up for that, so I'm just going to try to get through this real quick.

This is a practical way that this works out in your life. It's very practical. Most people teach on the Tabernacle as something very mystical. You go away with some basic knowledge, but you don't know how to use it. But God meant for us to have a service inside this first section.

Now, this is multiple types and shadows, and I'll try not to get into it too deep, but your soul is not your spirit. Your soul is your will, your intellect, and your emotions. That's what makes you *you*, and that's the soul. This soul is represented here by your will, which is the showbread. Your intellect is the lampstand, and your emotions are the altar of incense, where the incense is burning. Now it's also other things.

Now that showbread is your will. The showbread is two stacks of six loaves, it's like round bread. It's two stacks of six. We all know the bread is the Word of God.

Here comes another proof of the Bible—how many books are in the Bible? Sixty-six.

That's spiritual food, but it's also your will. Your will has to be lined up with His stack. (Amen). Your stack and His stack's gotta be lined up. This is part of the first works—your will.

What's your will doing? Well, it's all over the place. I know if it's anything like mine. But now that we know that it's got to line up, where do we find His will? It tells us—66. It's in the Bible. (Amen). You've got to be in the Bible.

Your intellect is the light that's in there, but that's also the illumination of the Holy Spirit. He will illuminate your intellect and mind as you feed on this Word. He will illuminate you. You will receive illumination. He says,

Psalms 119:130

"The entrance of Thy Word, gives light."

Then your emotions are here (points at the Altar of Incense). This is an altar to sacrifice things on. Do you know what this is? This is your first work. Your first works—it's all the things that you love, all the things that are precious to you, and all those things that you're fascinated with. You've been putting them back here (points to the throne), but He wants them right here (points to the Altar). But you can't do it.

You can't do it. It's too hard, but He wants you to be in this service. This is an ongoing process. It's called sanctification, in your life. It's an ongoing process, and you have to be involved with it, or you're going to get the same letter the Ephesians got. He says, "You're working, you're busy, but you haven't done the first works." It's kind of like He's saying, "Man, you've built a beautiful house, but where's the foundation?" That means if you build a house with no foundation, everything that you've done is worthless. No matter what you do, if you don't do this... Everything else comes from this. It's from your heart. It's from your being. You're sanctified unto the Lord and holy.

What happens is this:

The Lord will illuminate your conscience, and He'll show you something. He won't show you all at once—He knows you quit. He'll show you something, and that's that little scratch that's in you, like, "I know God doesn't want me to do this," or it's something that you're doing in your life. Whatever it is, it could be a million things, but you know. He'll illuminate your mind. (Amen). As you read the Bible, He'll start talking to you. Then you'll see these things in your heart, and you know where He wants them, don't you? It's gotta go right there (points at the altar of incense). When you put them there, and you burn them there, and you offer that up to God, it's a sweet-smelling savor. This alone constitutes New Testament worship. It begins right there in your heart and in your life. You worship Him by laying down your life.

Jesus says, "If you find your life, you will lose it. But if you lose your life for My sake, you'll find it." Amen.

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I think I'm going to end there because I over-prepared, but that gives you an idea of what these first works are like. You've got to be involved with this in your life. The foundation of your Christian life is built on this. You are the temple of God, and He wants to dwell there and fill you with the Holy Spirit. But just like in the days of old, if the temple or the tabernacle was polluted in

any way, He ain't there. He won't, He can't. He can't live there. And I know all of us in this age we live in, we've been polluted.

But the good news is, He's coming again, and He's preparing us to be without spot, wrinkle, blemish, or any such thing. We're going to be just like that because He is coming, and He's coming for that bride—that's going to be us. It is accomplished by us doing the repenting.

Revelation 2:5

"Remember from where you have fallen, and do the first works,"

and that is this:

Romans 12:1-2

"Present your body a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds."

How does that take place? You stay in the Bible. You eat that showbread, and you make sure your will starts to align with His will. You get illuminated, and you sacrifice those things.

A sacrifice is no good if it doesn't hurt. What good is it? If it's easy, you might say, "I might give that." No, He wants you to give yourself, just like He gave Himself for you. He laid down His life. He says,

1 John 3:16

"By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren."