

# Perry Zakutney Funeral Service

## Introduction

### a. objectives

1. subject – A testimony to the sufficiency of Scripture, the sovereignty of God, and salvation in Christ
2. aim – To cause us to know the sovereignty of God through faith in Christ as revealed in his Word
3. text – 2 Corinthians 5:17-20

### b. outline

1. The Sufficiency of Scripture
2. The Sovereignty of God
3. The Salvation in Christ

### c. opening

1. on a Monday in March of 2017, my phone rang – when I answered it, the caller introduced himself as *Perry Zakutney*, an elder with Grace Fellowship Baptist Church in Robertsedale, AL
  - a. after a bit of introduction and small talk, he proceeded to *announce* that he believed that the Lord had called *me* to be the next pastor of Grace Fellowship Baptist
  - b. it was from that call that a long and enduring friendship was born between us ...
2. the *best* way to describe that friendship is this: I was Perry's *pastor*, Perry was my **counselor**
  - a. I could *literally* call him at any time and he would jump in the Bronco and head over to the church, where we would sit and discuss whatever problem or issue or concern or uncertainty had arisen – quite often he would come to the church with Greta, just because he knew that we could stand around and talk about things while the dog chased a ball!
  - b. he was always there to give advice or offer some counsel (**as many of you know!**)
3. but ... Perry's counsel was always based on three (3) immutable truths in his heart and mind:
  - a. the sufficiency of Scripture, the sovereignty of God, and the salvation found only in Christ Jesus, all of which he was **absolutely certain**
  - b. this morning, I would like to consider these three through the lens of **2 Corinthians 5:17-20**

*"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God."*

## I. The Sufficiency of Scripture

### Content

#### a. Perry's absolute certainty of the sufficiency of Scripture

1. sufficiency = the belief that the Bible actually *answers* the questions of life; that it contains *truths* that can answer the most *fundamental questions* of human existence
  - a. sure, Perry was convinced that the Bible was the inspired, inerrant, and infallible Word of God, but he *also believed* (contrary to many!) that the Bible *actually had answers* to the issues of life
2. **i.e.** his advice was *always* based on applying *Scripture* to the circumstance he was addressing
3. **e.g. (IMO)**, this flowed out of the fact that his *conversion* was through the application of Scripture, by a man who came to him with a Bible and brought forth faith through it
  - a. Perry tells the story of his own conversion this way: after his mother died, he struggled mightily to make sense of it all – his religious upbringing *could not answer* the deep questions in his soul
  - b. but ... through a man he met in the business world, *and through the preaching of the Word*, Perry came to understand what Paul writes above: "*we are ambassadors for Christ ... God making his appeal through us*" (**i.e.** through the Scriptures revealed by him)
4. so ... Perry believed that every situation that needed counsel could be addressed *directly* from Scripture – his **counseling philosophy** was simple: **here's what the Bible says ... do it!**
  - a. **Eph. 5:25-31**: in marriage, the Bible says: love your wife self-sacrificially ... do it!
  - b. **Matt. 6:24**: in money, the Bible says: focus on the eternal over the earthly ... do it!
  - c. **2 Tim. 4:1-5**: as a pastor, the Bible says: preach the Word in every season ... do it!
  - d. **IOW**: for Perry, the Bible was his final authority of all matters of faith and practice – self-help books and topical preaching could never accomplish what the Bible can for those who are in Christ
5. but ... there was one *specific* thing that Perry saw from Scripture that he was *most* convinced of ...

## II. The Sovereignty of God

### Content

#### a. Perry's absolute certainty of the sovereignty of God

1. sovereignty of God = the absolute rule of God over all things; that all things in time and space come to pass because God has ordained them; that he is the *absolute* king over everything
  - a. this doctrine, *more than other*, guided how Perry counseled others, *particularly in spiritual matters*
  - b. in fact, in the last four (4) teachings that he did on Wednesday nights (2021-22), his subjects were "Free Will", "Predestination" (x2), and "The Sovereignty of God in Salvation"
2. *e.g.* he recognized this truth at the heart of his own conversion – the *only* reason that a "pagan" could *possibly* have been rescued to faith in Christ *was by the sovereign purpose and plan of God*
  - a. *i.e.* it's one of the *strongest* things we had *in common*, coming from the same religious tradition
  - b. he professed what Paul says above: "*all of this is from God*" – he knew (in his soul) that his new nature as a Christian *could only have come from the plan of God*, and *not primarily* from himself
  - c. and, it explained *for him* how Karen (and children and grandchildren) could come to faith after him: only by the sovereign plan of God – there was no *possibility* for any of them (or him) otherwise
3. sure ... he recognized that many are "afraid" of this, for it *seems* to suggest that we have no "freedom"
  - a. but, he *dismissed* those fears; he knew that although all things come to pass under the decree of God, he *also* knew that God had purposed to work his will *through* the choices of men (**Acts 2:23**)  
*"this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men."*
  - b. *e.g.* he used the words of Christ in the Gospel of John to point to the *responsibility* of men to believe *of their own natural will*, while (at the same time) knowing that this is *only possible* through the sovereign purposes of God in Christ (**John 7:37 vs. John 3:3**)
4. but ... the sovereignty of God wasn't just an "idea" ... it produced an *absolute assurance* in him ...

## III. The Salvation in Christ

### Content

#### a. Perry's absolute assurance of the completed work of Christ

1. for Perry, the gospel was a simple message: believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved
2. but, there was *something specific* that characterized his faith, and it was something that was *profound* to him *in contrast* to his religious upbringing:
  - a. namely, faith in Christ is faith *in Christ's completed work* = there is *nothing more* that can be added *to salvation* other than coming to the cross "with an empty hand of faith"
  - b. *i.e.* he understood what Paul said above: "*if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation ...*" – this is God "*through Christ, reconciling us to himself*"
    1. to be "*in Christ*" is to be transformed by the power of God and included (vicariously) in Jesus' sinless life, sacrificial death, glorious resurrection, and enduring kingdom
    2. and ... this is a transformation wrought by the Spirit of God which produces in the sinner a call to come to *Christ alone*, leaving behind the vestiges of rote religion or self-righteous spirituality
    3. it is to be "*reconciled to God*" = to be transformed by the power of the Spirit through the Word, under the sovereign purpose of God, hearing the call of the gospel, and responding by repenting of sin and trusting in the *completed work* of Christ
    4. **nothing more ... nothing less** – repent and trust in Christ: "*be reconciled to God*"
  - c. Perry was *absolutely sure* of his place in Christ, as he noted in his Bible (**John 10:27-28**)  
*"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand."*
3. *irony*: here I am talking about Perry, which he would *despise* – yet, today we consider not "Perry" (per se), but the gospel that he believed, professed, and counseled in others
  - a. he believed the Bible was sufficient to guide his life; he believed the sovereign plan of God had brought him to Christ; he believed the gospel was the message of life all needed to hear and obey
  - b. **IOW**: his life **glorified God** ... the legacy of Perry Zakutney (**IMO**) is that he was "*an ambassador for Christ*" – he counseled us all to follow Christ, as he so assuredly did, and his message was always *Christ*, not himself, as a good ambassador of God ...
  - c. **no prayer ... introduce "The Power of the Cross"**

## Obituary

Perry John Zakutney, Jr. age 75, passed away on June 4, 2023 in Fairhope, Alabama. He peacefully took his last breath surrounded by his family, after an 11 day battle with complications from open-heart surgery.

Perry (or “Max”, as he was called by his family *[another story, another time]*; “Grandpa” to the grandkids he loved) was born on October 6, 1947 in Clifton, New Jersey to Perry and Alice Zakutney. The oldest of 7, he spent his childhood playing football and baseball, and *occasionally* attending high school at Clifton High. He joined the United States Army in 1966, and met his wife Karen while stationed in Germany. *Decorum does not permit adding any additional stories from his early life at this point!*

After the army, Perry began work with Western Bell in New Jersey as a telephone repairman. After 10 years, he transferred to South Central Bell in Mobile, Alabama. He retired with AT&T as PBX Supervisor, after a 32 year career.

Perry was a member of Grace Fellowship Baptist in Robertsdale, AL, where he served as an elder, overseeing the missions and children’s ministries of the church. He previously served as an elder at Eastern Shore Presbyterian Church, and was integral in the establishment of Bayshore Christian School.

Perry is survived by his wife, Karen, of 54 years; his son Mark and daughter-in-law Laura; his daughter Denise Wilson and son-in-law David; brothers Raymond and David, sisters Elaine and Janet, and grandchildren Olivia, Reid, Nick, Connor, Maggie and Ruthie.

Perry was known for his deep love of God, His Word, and His people; his love and commitment to his family; his love of gourmet cooking and fellowship around the table *(he only had pictures of food on his phone)*, and *(of course!)* his love of *(obsession over?) Alabama football*. Perry was a jack of all trades and there was nothing he could not build or fix. His handiwork is everywhere; the stories of his influence are too numerous to *list here*.

On behalf of the family, thank you for the prayers, calls, texts, food, and recounting of memories. A very special thank you goes out to the SICU nurses at Thomas Hospital, who advocated tirelessly for him and gave him excellent care.

Opening Prayer ...