

Grace and the Adventure of Leadership

by C.J. Mahaney

C.J. Mahaney's sermon emphasizes the profound impact of grace and a divine perspective in effective leadership.

Duration: 1:04:15

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 2:1

Topics: "Leadership"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the topic of grace and the adventure of leadership. He admits that he did not initially volunteer to preach this message, but he believes it is a reflection of his life's work. The speaker emphasizes the importance of expressing gratitude to God and highlights a verse from the Bible that expresses deep thanksgiving. He also shares his disbelief that he gets paid to do what he loves and compares it to the idea of sports writers learning to write by the second grade.

Transcript

And now we transition to what is our topic this morning, which would be Grace and the Adventure of Leadership. If you find any creativity in that title, it is because it has been provided by my friend Dave Harvey, who without question has the finest titles for his messages of anyone I know, and was kind enough to provide me with this title because months before I gave this message at John Piper's Pastors Conference, the Tate Ministry required me to have a title for the message, and as I looked at my sorry title, I thought, no, this is a great opportunity to impress, and I knew exactly where to go for counsel, and so my friend devoted time to this, and I appreciate that. So you may title this Grace and the Adventure of Leadership, or I've subtitled it The Adventure of Godward Leadership.

Let me just inform you that this is not a message that I volunteered to preach, nor did I initiate, and to some degree that is to my shame. I shared this message when we visited the Church in Wales earlier this year, and to his credit, Kenneth Moresco, who has not only heard this message but heard this theme from me for many years, I was thinking this morning that really the two messages I'm preaching at this conference are, I think, really the sum total of my life, which is both encouraging and discouraging. When you think of giving hundreds if not thousands of messages, and I think of all the notebooks in my office just filled with messages, and you can really reduce, in my life, which given my limited intelligence isn't a surprise, you can reduce them to two, but if you were to reduce them to two, these are the only two I care the most about.

If you asked me to speak to a group of leaders, there's no text I'd rather address leaders from 1 Corinthians 2, 1 through 5, to resolve to nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. And then if I had a second session, be it to leaders or in a church, this would be my second session. After that message in Wales, Kenneth came to me immediately and just said, you know, it's been years since you've preached that.

You must preach that again. I've learned so much. This is the fifth or sixth time I've heard it, but it was as if I'd never heard it before.

In his wonderful, enthusiastic style, he wasn't just encouraging me, he was ordering me, which is kind of a New York way of communicating, which I love in Kenneth most of the time. And so, listen, I just want you to know, in my pride, I did a similar, you know, I was polite. Thank you.

I was impressed with his humility, but I just quietly dismissed it. I've preached this message, and there's no need to preach this again. And that's one of my, I think, most serious failures as a leader is assumption, assuming people understand the cross, assuming people understand grace.

Don't do that. Don't do that. Assume they don't.

That would be the wisest assumption to me. And so, then a chorus began, and time doesn't permit, but a chorus began, and the team was unanimous in insisting that I preach on this. And then I chose to preach on a Piper's Conference, and time doesn't permit me to go into the background of that, but I do want to thank all the pastors who attended that conference.

Your support was of immeasurable value, and so I thank you. But then after I preached at that conference, I used that as an appeal to not preach here because the tape was circulating, and I'm getting all kinds of calls from people, and mail from you folks, and email that you heard the tape of the very message that I'm going to preach. And so I said, well, there's another reason not to preach.

The first reason, which I wasn't as quick to reveal, was just my pride. I'd much rather preach a new message, because I'd much rather you'd be impressed, or at least interested. Because I know my own arrogance when I hear somebody say they're going to preach a message I've heard.

It's not that I don't know that I need to hear it or want to hear it, but mentally throughout, I'm thinking, I heard that. I know that. I know it's coming.

And it's just arrogance. Pure and, I was going to say simple, pure and disgusting. And so, actually, up until last night, I was going to delegate this session.

I called Joshua a couple days ago and told him, bring a certain message, because I'm still not sure I want to do this. And so I asked the team the other day, sure you want me to do this? So, you know, I'm ashamed that I was reluctant to do this. It's just pride.

And I hate my pride. I don't hate it enough. But I want to put it to death afresh this morning.

Because this really is, this is definition in its purest form of a distinctive among PDI pastors, or a distinctive we desire among PDI pastors. This is what I want, what the team wants, individuals presently in your church or those added to your church through Alpha or whatever form of evangelism, this is the kind of pastoring we want them to encounter. Pastors who motivate by grace.

Steve Rushin is a columnist for Sports Illustrated. And Sports Illustrated's magazine I thoroughly enjoy, except for one time a year when it goes pornographic on me. And my wife intercepts as I alert her that issue.

But every other week of the year, it's a wonderful magazine. And Steve Rushin is probably my favorite columnist. And there are many great columnists.

Let me just want to the outset give you a brief quote that I think is relevant. Before I do, I just want to acclimate you a little to his writing, because he's a rare combination of insight and humor. Here's one of his articles he writes, begins, working press, Pittsburgh pirate once said to me with a sneer, working press.

That's sort of like jumbo shrimp. He's part of the working press. My favorite oxymoron he writes is guest host.

I replied, Chumlee, you know, like they used to have on The Tonight Show. But he didn't know and he didn't care. In fact, he thought I was calling him a moron.

So he calmly a lit from his clubhouse stool and chloroformed me with his game socks. He's very descriptive. But I see his point.

My life's work is not work. And this is not my point this morning, but that's how I think of what we do to. This is not work.

Okay, nobody's suffering here. I just cannot believe we get paid to do this. I cannot believe I get paid to do this.

I cannot believe I get paid to do this with you. I cannot believe that. That's just short of immoral.

That's just it should be illegal. Honestly, I should have to work to subsidize myself to be able to do this. But I see his point.

My life's work is not work. Indiana basketball coach Bobby Knight likes to say of sports writers, quote, we all learn to write by the second grade. Most of us move on to bigger things.

Russian then writes, most of us stop throwing chairs. Most of us stop throwing chairs and calling ourselves Bobby by the second grade, too. But I see his point, he writes.

Now, here is the more relevant article you can appreciate more. When President Clinton professed profound regrets last Friday over last year's accident in which 20 people died when a U.S. military plane severed the cable on an Italian ski lift. He echoed another recent pronouncement.

In February, recall, he was profoundly saddened by a People magazine puff piece on his daughter. If two events, one tragic, one trivial, evoke the same rhetoric of grief, is either statement meaningful? Depends what your definition of is. We live in an age of profound baloney.

Listen, certain words have been turned upside down and had all the meaning shaken from their pockets. Boy, here's my concern. I do not want our people to become familiar with any reference to profound as it relates to grace.

And I do fear that grace one day could be a certain word turned upside down with all the meaning shaken from its pockets. And I just want us to guard against that. This message this morning, without exaggeration, it is profound.

It is profound. And I use that word intentionally. I use that word intelligently.

Paul's attitude toward the Corinthian church, Paul's affection for the Corinthian church, is a profound demonstration of the grace of God. It is profound. Please turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 1 if you would.

I have spent much time over the years studying 1 Corinthians. I have benefited immeasurably from this study. Where would we be without 1 Corinthians? That is a frightening thought.

I have learned many invaluable lessons, as I referred to the other night from chapter 2. But another invaluable lesson I have learned from 1 Corinthians is Paul's attitude toward the Corinthian church, his affection for the Corinthian church, it has had a profound impact. It makes a difference. This message, which I really am going to be giving to you in an abbreviated form, and I'm only going to concentrate on one of the three points, this message has had a profound impact.

There really isn't a week that goes by, and actually I don't think there's a day that goes by, that I am not influenced by the content of 1 Corinthians 1, 1 through 9 in particular, as I have the privilege to pastor people. Not a day. I do not think that's an exaggeration.

Not a day. Because I find it remarkable that Paul was attracted to this church in light of their need for adjustment. I'm going to make an assumption here because we don't have time, but I think we can safely say there was no other church he served more in need of adjustment than the Corinthians.

And the adjustment involved their opposition to him personally as well. It's a challenge to adjust a church as immature as the Corinthians, but it is a particular challenge when the church you're adjusting is opposed to you. And I know for myself, I would have disassociated myself from this church, or at the very least distanced myself from this church.

I would not desire to be involved with this church. And yet, his passion for this church is evident throughout this book, and it is an example worthy of our emulation. What explanation do we have for this man's remarkable attitude toward this church, for this man's affection for the Corinthian church? Well, here is my summary statement from chapter 1 verses 1 through 9. Paul's exemplary attitude toward the Corinthians and his extraordinary affection for the Corinthians was created by his divine perspective of the Corinthians.

His exemplary attitude toward the Corinthians, his extraordinary affection for the Corinthians was created by his divine perspective of the Corinthians. That is the only explanation for why this man could write in verse 4, I always thank God for you. The only explanation for that outpouring of gratefulness initially, for that disposition of heart toward this church, the only explanation for that is his divine perspective of the Corinthian church.

So don't misunderstand, the primary purpose of this letter is adjustment, but the adjustment is effective because his attitude is exemplary. The adjustment is effective because his affection for them is extraordinary. Do not adjust individuals where you don't have a similar attitude as does Paul toward the Corinthians.

Do not adjust individuals whom you do not feel an extraordinary affection in your heart for those individuals. But this morning I just want to remind you where you don't have that attitude, where that affection is lacking, here's where you might receive it. You are lacking a divine perspective of that individual.

Everyone in here has difficult individuals they're serving. It's probably whoever you're thinking about right now, as I'm even referencing this. Individuals who if they came to you and said, I feel called to serve in a foreign country, you would feign grief, but secretly and quietly in your heart later on, thank you Lord.

And God provides those individuals and usually they come, you know, in group form. It's not as if there's just an isolated individual. At times an entire group seems to emerge within your church.

You wonder how did this group, how did this individual, how this group get through the commitment process, as if the commitment process is flawless and we should never, never have to encounter difficult individuals. Well it just doesn't work that way. God just solely for the purpose of your sanctification will provide means of your sanctification in the form of difficult individuals who will find their way to your sphere.

And that's where Paul's example is of just immeasurable value to us. Because if Paul, if Paul can reflect this attitude toward the Corinthians, this affection for the Corinthians, I have no excuse. I have no excuse for a sinful attitude toward anyone in Covenant Life Church or in PDI for that matter.

So what created this attitude, what created this affection in light of the adjustment needed? Well it was his divine perspective. Paul had a divine perspective of the Corinthian Church. My question for us this morning is do you have a divine perspective of your church? If you don't, you will find it difficult to be filled with affection for those most in need of adjustment.

And pastoring involves adjustment, therefore we must have this attitude and we must have this affection in order to adjust effectively. You will be called upon to exercise authority. Paul's exercise of authority which was legitimate was effective because of his genuine faith and affection for the Corinthian Church.

It was created by a divine perspective. The divine perspective is contained in these first nine verses and because of time limitations we are not going to read this section of Scripture but I'm just going to bring them to your attention. The first is this, Paul had an understanding of the call of God.

His divine perspective of the Corinthian Church is evident in his understanding of the call of God. Three times in the first nine verses Paul references call. Calling is really of immeasurable benefit to us personally and of immeasurable benefit to us pastorally as well.

It reminds us of God's initiative. We were called. Call is not a general invitation awaiting our response.

The call of God is a divine summons creating our response. Whenever Paul references call, he is reminding himself and his readers that he's reminding them of the prior activity of God. He's reminding them of divine initiative.

In other words, you were acted upon by God before you acted in response to God. Paul was very aware that the Corinthian Church was deficient in their response to God in numerous areas at present. But he begins this letter reminding himself and reminding them of the prior activity of God in their lives.

Which are you more aware of? The prior activity of God in those you serve or the present deficiency? Which can be more obvious and more challenging to you personally? Which are you more aware of? Here's what happens when you have this divine perspective. When you are aware that God has acted on an individual who is in need of adjustment, you will experience faith for change and perseverance for the process. And can I tell you that the individual you're adjusting will be aware if that faith for change is present in your heart.

Individuals who are on the receiving end of counseling are very perceptive of irritation in the heart of a pastor. The transforming effect of divine perspective is as follows. When I am seated across from somebody or standing in front of somebody after a Sunday meeting, I want to remind myself, particularly if they are in need of adjustment, I am now talking to someone who has been previously acted upon by God.

What a difference! Just even that statement makes a difference in my heart even as I stand here before you. I must begin with that divine perspective of that individual or else I will be tempted at times to become more aware of present deficiencies. And though maybe the content of my counsel doesn't change, the absence of faith is apparent to the one who is receiving my counsel.

Call imparts, an awareness of call imparts faith for change and perseverance for the process. Which are you more aware of? The call of God on an individual's life or the present deficiencies. Point number two, Paul's divine perspective or his awareness of the divine perspective is obvious in that he was more aware or his recognition, he was more aware of evidences of grace than areas in need of growth.

Paul recognized the grace of God. In verse four, he writes, I always thank God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus. I always thank God for you.

This is just a remarkable verse. I always thank God for you. Now could I encourage you, could I appeal to you, study Paul's letters and become familiar, become aware of, become familiar with, become aware of the high priority he placed on Thanksgiving.

Paul placed a high priority on Thanksgiving in relation to God and in expression to those you serve. He placed a high priority on Thanksgiving. I was just reading in the dictionary of Paul and his letters the following, under Thanksgiving, this is the first statement, Paul mentions the subject of Thanksgiving more often line for line than any other author pagan or Christian.

Paul mentions the subject of Thanksgiving more often line for line than any other author pagan or Christian. We must emulate his example. Would that be the perception of our people, of our leadership? Are they aware of the high priority we are placing on Thanksgiving in response to grace in light of the cross and having been provoked by Paul's example? Paul recognized the grace of God.

He was aware of evidences of grace in the Corinthian church and he gave thanks to God for those evidences of grace. Covenant Life, we have just finished a study of the letter of First Thessalonians. Matter of fact, go there just briefly, if you would please.

First Thessalonians, I would want you to be aware that Paul's expression of gratefulness was not simply the result of some conventional form letter approach. It wasn't just some, you know, superficial expression of politeness on his behalf. We must not read too hurriedly over his expressions of thanksgiving.

We must note them. We must note them in detail. We must experience the effect of his expressions of thanksgiving to God and for a particular church.

They are characterized by sincerity. They are characterized by passion. They are characterized by specificity.

They are characterized by variety. And we must also, you know what? You can note the high priority Paul placed on thanksgiving when you're aware of the absence of it in the letter to the Galatians. He deliberately withholds this thanksgiving, which we read about in Corinthians and are going to read about here in Thessalonians.

He deliberately withholds that thanksgiving in Galatians and that is instructive. Now, in First Thessalonians, there is no absence of thanksgiving. Chapter 1, let me just give you the three references because actually more thanksgiving appears in Thessalonians, First Thessalonians, than in any other letter Paul writes to any other church.

There are three references to thanksgiving and they are all rich. The first one is chapter 1, verses 2 through 5. You can't just read that one reference alone without becoming aware of the high priority Paul assigned to thanksgiving. He informs them that he is privately, continuously thankful to God for them and then he expresses that thankfulness and his gratefulness to God for them in written form.

And we must, we must, we must motivated by grace follow his example as well. How, how much time in private are you devoting to giving thanks to God for those you have the privilege to serve? See, you cannot effectively give thanks publicly if you are not giving thanks privately. The discerning will, will recognize your insincerity.

So thanksgiving must be a private practice before it's a public act. So we begin by giving thanks to God for those we serve in private, but we also must express that gratefulness to each other. And Paul expresses it here, puts on a clinic and expressing it in written form.

I thank God for you. Look at verse 2. We always thank God for all of you. Mentioning you in our prayers.

We continually remember before our God and father. And here he's going to get very specific about what he remembers. Now, what I want you to be aware of is his thanksgiving is always God words.

His thanksgiving is always God word. It's always God centered. This is not congratulations for personal success.

This is acknowledging the grace of God in each other's lives. There's a difference. This expression of thanksgiving should be God centered.

It should ultimately be God glorifying. We are acknowledging the grace of God in other's lives and we are really directing their attention through our expression of thanksgiving to God and reminding them that it is from God they have received this evidence of grace we are drawing their attention to. We always thank God.

That's what we're doing when we're giving thanks. We're doing it in private and then we express it in public. I thank God for you.

That really is the ultimate expression of affection you can communicate to any other human being. I thank God for you. And then we need to be specific as Paul was toward the Thessalonians.

He was specific in his expression of gratefulness. He isolates their character. He isolates his appreciation of divine election and their experience of that.

He isolates later on in the chapter that they were a model. He talks about their commitment to the mission. He is very specific.

To be around Paul was to be the recipient of his gratefulness to God for the evidences of grace he observed in your life and those evidences of grace would be specifically detailed by Paul. I don't know what you think of Paul, how you imagine Paul, what I've pondered this. I just want you to be aware you couldn't be with Paul very long without being the recipient of his expression of gratefulness to God for you.

Whatever your perceptions of Paul, please include this one first and foremost. He was a man who devoted himself to gratefulness in God to God in private for the evidences of grace he was aware of. And when he emerged publicly, if he was coming to your church, if you were encountering him personally, you felt the full force of this man's gratefulness.

And I want the people we serve and I know you want the people you serve to feel the full force of that gratefulness to God for them on a daily basis. And let it be specific. My favorite verse is in chapter three verse nine.

This message would not be complete if I didn't at least draw your attention to this by way of reminder. Chapter three verse nine. How can we thank God enough for you? First Thessalonians 3.9. How? How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy we have in the presence of our God because of you? That is my favorite verse in relation to expressing thanksgiving.

How can we thank God enough? It's a rhetorical question obviously, but it's filled with deep emotion and passion. D. Michael Martin in his commentary in First Thessalonians says his rhetorical question, how can we thank God enough, assumes the impossibility of the task. I want Covenant Life Church.

I want PDI to be aware. I have one impossible task and that impossible task is this. How can I thank God enough for you? Okay, hold it together CJ and get through this material.

It is an impossible task. What thanksgiving he writes could conceivably be adequate repayment for all that God had done. The implication is that any thanks offered to God for this benefit would be pitifully inadequate.

He simply could not thank God enough for them and I simply cannot thank God enough for you. Listen, when he writes, because of the joy, in return for all the joy we have in the presence of our God because of you. You know, listen, on behalf of the team, thanks for all the joy.

I've got an impossible task right now, but thank you for all the joy we have in the presence of God because of you. It's an impossible task. I've never done this right.

I've never done it well. I've never felt satisfied. Matter of fact, this verse has set me free.

It has. It set me free. This comment by this commentator helped me immeasurably because for years, every time I was done, I thought that wasn't adequate enough.

You are not articulate enough. Your vocabulary is limited. You think you'd be able to do one thing well.

You think you'd be able to thank people. And so, you know, I would experience that every time I try. This one will do it.

This one will be better. This one, this one will be, this one will be adequate. This one, this one will be sufficient.

And every time I feel like, and this has helped me. No, it's impossible. You will never in this lifetime achieve this, but you are always to strive for it.

It is a glorious, impossible task worthy of your best efforts, but this is our task. It is a task. It is our privilege and responsibility to communicate to those we serve how grateful we are to God for them and to make sure they understand how can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy we have in the presence of God because of you.

Now, I wish, I wish I could linger longer here, but, but I noticed my watch and time is working against me. Just, just evaluate your leadership in light of, of that verse, in light of Paul's example. And turn back now to first Corinthians, if you would, please, because Gordon Fee writes in response to verse four, where Paul says, I always thank God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus.

He says, what is most remarkable about this thanksgiving is the apostle's ability to thank God for the very things in the church that because of abuse are also causing him grief. That is so true. See, in light of the adjustment that is necessary here related to their attitude toward the gifts and their practice of the gifts, I would not begin the letter thanking God.

I would not begin the letter thanking God and affirming the gifts of the Spirit in their midst. That's not how I would begin the letter. In light of all the adjustment they need, I would not begin the letter saying, I always thank God for you because of the grace given you in Christ Jesus for in him you have been enriched in every way and all your speaking and in all your knowledge.

Therefore, you do not lack any spiritual gift. That is not how I would have begun this letter. My tendency would have been to dismiss the gifts altogether, not to, from the outset, affirm them as genuine evidences of grace in light of all the need for adjustment in the Corinthians in both their attitude toward them and their practice of them.

Why would that be my approach? Well, that would be my approach because I'm proud. See, only the humble can identify evidences of grace in those in need of adjustment. Only the humble can do that.

The proud are incapable of doing that. The self-righteous are not capable of such leadership. One of my favorite peanut comic strips is as follows.

It opens with Lucy and Linus in their living room. Linus is curled up in a chair. He's quietly reading a book.

Lucy is standing behind him. She's got a funny look on her face. She turns to Linus and says, it happens just by looking at you.

What happens, replies Linus. And Lucy calmly answers, I can feel a criticism coming on. It happens just by looking at you.

What happens? I can feel a criticism coming on. Brothers and sisters, apart from divine perspective, that's all you'll feel coming on when you look at people in your church. That's all you'll feel.

You'll just feel one criticism after another coming on. Recently, while watching *Pride and Prejudice* with my family, at one point, Elizabeth's father has discovered in a letter he received from the difficult-to-appreciate Mr. Collins, that those of you who are familiar with Mr. Collins will know whom I reference. He's informed by Mr. Collins that the arrogant and self-righteous Mr. Dassey was interested in his daughter Elizabeth.

And Elizabeth's father was shocked. And he assumed that his daughter shared his disdain for Mr. Dassey and discovered, in relating the content of this letter, that Elizabeth, in fact, had had a change of heart. But this was the father's comment about Mr. Dassey.

Mr. Dassey, who never looks on a woman except to see a blemish. And I just thought, no, that's not just Mr. Dassey. That can be Mr. Mahaney.

That can be Mr. Pastor. If when you look upon others, like Mr. Dassey, who never looked upon a woman except to see a blemish, if when you look upon those you serve, that is primarily or exclusively what you see. You are self-righteous.

You are lacking the godly attitude. You are lacking the affection necessary to serve that individual and ever be effective in adjusting that individual. Which are you more aware of, evidences of grace or areas that are in need of growth? Let's just apply this for a few moments.

Number one, as you relate to your spouse, what is your spouse more aware of, evidences of grace or areas in need of change and growth? Husbands, you need to at some point ask your wife, what do I make you more aware of? Which are you more aware of? Do I make you more aware of evidences of grace I observe or is the accent on areas needing change? That's the difference this makes. This can and will have an immediate transforming effect on a marriage. How you relate to your children, this will have an immediate and transforming effect.

If your child is more aware of areas needing adjustment than evidences of grace, you will eventually exasperate your child. Ask yourself this, when is the last time you informed your child of the evidences of grace you have observed? And if it has been longer than a week, it has been too long, you have some work to do and you have something to look forward to. May all our children grow up in a rich environment where they are the rich recipients of our affection and our encouragement as we observe evidences of grace in their lives.

So that when we do need to adjust them and adjust them, we need to do. The adjustment is effective because the environment isn't one of adjustment, the environment is one of grace. As a pastoral team, let's evaluate whether we are motivating by grace, whether we are more aware of evidences of grace.

We work hard at this at Covenant Life. I know you do at your church as well. As senior pastor, it is my privilege and responsibility to draw attention to the evidences of grace I observe in the lives of the pastoral team I have the distinct privilege to serve with, as well as team leader and apostolic team I have the distinct privilege to serve with.

In both settings, I am intent, I am intentional about drawing attention to the evidences of grace. I would encourage the regular exercise of isolating a particular individual and then asking others to participate in a process of identifying an evidence of grace that you have observed in that individual's life. When you are praying together as pastors, we have this practice at Covenant Life, I would encourage you to do the same.

We will take one hour to do nothing but give thanks to God for evidences of grace. No prayer requests allowed, no petitions allowed based on areas needing change. Doesn't mean we don't ever intercede in that way, but I want us to keep an atmosphere or an environment appreciating the grace of God so that there is faith when we address areas that are in need of adjustment.

I'm very aware that we have an all-day pastor's meeting or on a pastor's retreat, so we devote time at the outset of the day to devote at least one hour just to giving thanks because I know the rest of the day we're going to be talking about areas we need to grow. The only appropriate way to enter into that dialogue with a biblical attitude and a divine perspective is to give thanks from the outset and then throughout I want to maintain that divine perspective so that we have faith for change and perseverance for the process. It can be so easy that at the end of a day when pastors are meeting to serve the people of God to instead have drifted from the divine perspective that is necessary for the changes that you've decided to pursue and implement.

We have created cards now with that verse 1st Thessalonians 3:9 and when we thank God for people we send them that card wanting them to know we were just thanking God. How can we thank God enough for you today?

There are people we send cards to that we're praying for because they have particular needs and then there's a whole another set of cards just praying for just giving thanks to God for people letting them know just we're looking for every way we can to communicate our gratefulness because what's our temptation brothers our temptation on a daily basis is to be excessively if not exclusively aware of areas that are in need of growth and individuals that need to change and and self-righteously we impose our timetable look God will be patient with me and he will teach me month after month after month and I have the privilege and opportunity to study and study and listen to tapes and go to conferences and then finally after a year he changes you know incrementally in a particular area and then

he teaches a four-week series almost demanding that the church change in that period of time unaware of how long it took him to change imposing an unrealistic self-righteous timetable listen you know what this will be helpful for all of us it'll be helpful for you to remind your people we aren't in heaven yet that's that is it's just helpful you know there's just certain things I tell myself throughout the day it's a fallen world I find that just so helpful it's a fallen world people can act so surprised to think hey it's a fallen world it's a it's just that's right it's a fallen world and then this is the next one remember we're not in heaven yet it's just so helpful remember we're not in heaven yet we are not working with people who have glorified bodies yet nor will they obviously in

our lifetime they are wandering sheep and even after the miracle of regeneration that is their tendency think of it as providing job security if you will there's there's there will always be a need for pastors because there will always be sheep with a tendency to wander so so it's an appealing profession in that regard sanctification as I said the other day is a process it's just so helpful to be intimately aware of that actually it's described in the bible Paul likes the word walk that's a wonderful picture because there's nothing dramatic or apparently dynamic about walking I don't personally well well let's not get it well I mean I know it's an Olympic event but it certainly doesn't receive prime time coverage and nor should it but the way those individuals look when they walk I'm sure

they are great athletes but just normal walking I'm not talking about power walking if you're into that and and if you are please well never mind no I do I'll drive by people and I think you know I do respect that

person there's no fear of man because if there was they they would not be doing that that would they would just not be walking that way particularly men I just you know I think he looks familiar I think I knew him in gym class in seventh grade only guy who came out with the uniform wrote his name and you know that kind of a guy and walking that that picture should help us in other words it's not sprinting it's not a dash it's not the long jump it's just walking so you're going to have to be perceptive to recognize identify and appreciate walking as dynamic right and we might I

mean David Pattinson's has been recently I thought was so excellent he says God is pleased even with a shuffle now that's grace motivated pastoring to just be able to say you're shuffling you're leaning you're facing the right direction and I just want to celebrate that facing the right direction I want to introduce new categories prior to walking is facing there's leaning see there's shuffling walking is huge okay walking's like top end walking's warp speed we need we need listen this is pastoring motivating by grace is recognizing God is at work helping individuals perceive where and how he is at work because often they are unaware see when I grow I'm I'm usually the least perceptible of my growth I'm the most imperceptible person concerning my own growth but it appears God is at work

in my life because others are telling me he is and what faith that imparts to me when I hear that somebody's noticed something that there's been change what a difference this makes in our lives so when you see somebody facing the right direction when you see somebody leaning shuffling walking it is a cause for celebration and it is our pastoral privilege and responsibility to draw their attention to it God is at work see pastoring is about being aware of where God is at work more aware of where God is at work than you are of the need for change and growth in a person's life I love the quotes by Henry Blackaby where he writes as follows right now God is working all around you and in your life one of the greatest tragedies among God's people is that while they have a deep longing to

experience him they are experiencing God day after day but do not know how to recognize him if this has been true of you of your own Christian experience I pray this book will help you to learn ways to recognize clearly the activity of God in and around your life they are experiencing God day after day but do not know how to recognize him pastoring is helping people learn how to recognize this God who is at work in their lives day after day that's what pastoring is about that's what motivating by grace is about study the broad work of the spirit so you'll know how to recognize God at work in their lives this is why I was so opposed to the emphasis on unusual manifestations not only could it not be biblically supported but it it it diminished or dismissed altogether the broad work of the

spirit so you had countless people who were experiencing the power of God in their lives but unaware of it because attention was being drawn to unusual manifestations we were not going to put up with that some of the greatest manifestations of power I've seen are individuals who are suffering in ways I can't relate to and yet not complain that is power I want to draw attention to that I want them to know that's not just a disposition their hearts not temperament it's not family background that's power God is at work if God wasn't at work you would be charging him right now you would be bitter right now God is at work in your life what's amazing isn't this one of the greatest ways of pastoring is when you bring that to their attention how initially they're unaware and then they become

aware isn't pastoring a joy when you motivate by grace that's what Sundays are about Sundays are about just building into your church God is at work he's at work here and here sees every moment of the meeting to make people aware of his work for them and his work within them that's what Sundays are about you can do that through the worship you can do that through the offering you can do that through the

announcements you should do that through the message you can do that through the ministry you can do that through you honor you can it's just may may every strategic decision that Sunday morning be motivated by a desire to help people become freshly aware of God is at work because they've probably spent the week more aware of their need for growth and paralyzed by condemnation than they

are of the grace of God evident in their lives listen when you are discerning evidences of grace and when you are communicating that discernment you are not simply emulating Paul's example you are imitating God himself listen first Corinthians chapter four this is an incredible verse first Corinthians chapter four the Corinthians are arrogant and they have been influenced by the wisdom of this world they have wrongly judged and evaluated Paul and he is addressing them and challenging their arrogance and we don't have time to look at this in any detail but I think this is one of the most remarkable passages in all of scripture and that's in verse five as he is drawing their attention to future judgment and trying to adjust them for they are assured they already know future judgment

particularly as it relates to Paul and so he says to them in verse five therefore judge nothing before the appointed time wait till the Lord comes look at this he will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men's hearts I when I first read this I can remember when I first read this I was not prepared for the next statement when I read he will expose the motive of men heart I did not anticipate and I think if you were honest you didn't either that the next statement would read and at that time at that time when my motives are exposed in this context here is leaders being evaluated at that time when my motives are exposed each will receive I can't promise I'll be able to recover from this verse but I'm going to try each will receive his praise from God you

know what's up with this um does anybody honestly here think that after being examined by the omniscient God in the realm of your motives are you anticipating reward listen last year was one of the most memorable experiences I've ever had when you honored me it was also one of the most uncomfortable experiences because as you were drawing attention to where you observed God was at work I'm more aware of where I need to grow I'm sitting there thinking I'm so glad they think that may they remain deceived and and I'm thinking of my sinfulness I'm I'm thinking they deserve better that's that's what I'm thinking and that that's only based on my very superficial evaluation not just my motives but my lack of gifting etc now one day I'm going to stand before the omniscient one and he's going

to examine me in light of his holiness not for the purpose of reconciliation but reward and when he scrutinizes me you know what I would expect I would expect you know what's going to happen he's going to honor you now if I think last year was uncomfortable brothers and sisters what is that moment going to be like when God himself praises me when God himself says CJ there were evidences of critics and I want to praise you to argue but I won't because I will be afraid and I'm street smart enough to know wouldn't be wise to do this at least publicly in front of everyone historically maybe when I can get a private moment when I when I have the privilege during this break to acknowledge an evidence of grace in somebody's life I'm not just following Paul's example I'm imitating my lord oh man

that scripture at that time each man and the context is leaders I just I don't think in terms of being rewarded for my leadership listen if Paul can identify evidences of grace in the Corinthian church you have no excuse for failing to identify evidences of grace in your church because your church is no different when I was studying Thessalonians one of the commentators said in the related to the passage about where Paul thanks God for them he said we have no reason to think that the Thessalonian church was any less an odd collection of individuals than our church that's exactly right we tend to be well yeah

Thessalonians now just as odd a group as your group final point is this divine perspective was evident his life as he recognized God's call his awareness of evidences of grace and

then Paul oh lord his confidence in the faithfulness of God chapter one could you just please look this is remarkable that Paul could write to this church he will keep you strong to the end it this church was anything but strong at present how could he write to them with integrity he will keep you strong to the end how could he have confidence about their end I would not have had that confidence and so that you will be blameless on that day this church was anything but blameless so you read verse 8 and you think how could he say these things well here's why he could say these things verse 9 God who has called you into fellowship with his son Jesus Christ our Lord is faithful that was the source of his confidence so you too can say verse 8 about your church but only if you believe verse 9

and you should say verse 8 about your church but you must familiarize yourself first with verse 9 and come its influence and authority look when I think about our future my confidence is not in the exceptional leaders gathered here I thank God that you are exceptional but my confidence ultimately in our future is in the faithfulness of God my confidence in the future is in this he who began a good work in us will sustain it and eventually bring it to completion until the day of Jesus Christ that is the source of my confidence and if Paul can have that confidence in the Corinthians I can have that confidence in PDI and I can have that confidence in Covenant Life Church I can have that same confidence and that confidence will make a difference in how I lead PDI and how I lead Covenant Life

Church that confidence will make a difference in every message I preach that confidence will make a difference in my pastoring it'll make a difference in my counseling and every casual interaction I have with somebody particularly those who are in need of adjustment pardon me as I tell the story again it's like it's the best illustration I know but when when I had the privilege to marry Carolyn and thank you Lord that she said yes just before I went out to take my walk which was a lengthy one because Carolyn's dad loved loved his daughter but he he wanted my headship accented at the wedding too so I had to appear at the back of the auditorium and take a lengthy walk they're supposed to be coordinated with a song and it it was a challenge we I'm there at rehearsal I'm trying to do that

wedding walk thing I can't do that wedding walk thing and my friends are there I know this isn't going to go over well with them uh so but I wanted to honor him and uh but I mean this is the last interaction I had with him before I emerged from the side room I extended my hand to him and I said to him and I mean it's vivid as if I'm as if he's going to appear when I open my eyes I said dad thanks for your trust now just imagine at this moment I'm slightly exhilarated okay okay I'm about to be married to to my fantasy to the woman who exceeded my dreams so I am as jazzed as I can possibly be thanks dad dad thanks for your trust now this is carolyn's father there's no smile on his face his facial expression remains sober and serious he extends his hand to me and he says these exact words I

don't trust you exact exact quote I I don't trust you he said I trust the lord whoo now I think I hear my song uh I knew this much not wise to adjust him at this point not wise to point out that pseudo-spiritual and yes ultimately we trust god but if you don't trust me at all then if your trust is you don't you don't trust me why are you it just wasn't wise to do that surely you do trust me can't you please acknowledge some degree of trust even if it's not perfect now fast forward to November and I am standing at the back of the auditorium at covenant life with my lovely daughter as we have that last moment together and look you need to be very clear about this I do trust Brian when he asked to court Kristen I was seated and when we were done interacting and I gave him permission he said

I was I was told to ask you this question only when you were seated and he said I'm surprised that you're so calm and I said Brian I am calm I'm calm because of two things I'm calm because I trust the lord and I'm calm because I respect you and I do and I love the difference he has made in her life he has he has really put on a clinic in leadership he has been very patient with my Kristen and the challenges that she has understandably confronted leaving her family and the only church she's ever known to relocate to be a part of a church planting I love to observe the look in her eye this is real smart isn't it he's just an idiot and it's it's incurable but I do I love the look in her eyes when she's gazing at him I love I love the way she laughs when she's around him I love the friendship

I love his gentleness and I love his leadership I love him I do as does my whole family actually we're coming here Brian Brian loves to eat he does he enjoys it for the glory of god it's fun actually it's one of those kind of guys it's fun for me to watch him eat because it it seems it does it seems to be a worship experience for him and I if it's not lobster king crab legs I don't have those experiences when I eat I don't I don't really like food don't really like eating but so he loves these cinnamon rolls my wife cooks so Carolyn made a bunch of them so we're in the car we're just driving away he's got three on the plate I think he's already had a half dozen and Nicole starts to point out that last night when mom was making them she said over the entire history where these cinnamon

rolls have been made we're always able to take part of the dough and eat it ourselves because we like it so much and and Nicole said but Brian you are you have like favored son-in-law status because last night my mom wouldn't let me touch this dough Janelle and I are trying to get this dough and so they began to project guilt onto Carolyn that that she loves Brian more than she loves her own daughters so then Carolyn interjects that no she doesn't obviously and that she will love all her son-in-laws equally and and I looked over and said I'm not gonna love them all equally we're gonna rank those guys let me make that very clear from the outset it's gonna be none of this I love you all the same no no let's see what you got and then I'll let you know the order and give you some hope it can

change my Kristen's hand and put it in Brian's I made it very clear to him at that moment as I was walking back to my seat I thought dad did get it partially right because ultimately my trust is not in Brian ultimately my trust is in the Lord Paul had confidence in the faithfulness of God and it affected his attitude toward the Corinthians to this church so in need of adjustment so filled with legitimate blame so weak he says he will keep you strong strong to the end on that day you will be blameless how do I know this God Lord I pray that we might have the divine perspective as we return to our families and to the churches we have the privilege to serve I pray that divine perspective would create affection and would create faith and perseverance for the adjustment in the process of

change I pray that Lord in your name I pray that everyone would return more aware of the call of God than areas in need of adjustment more aware of evidences of grace than areas in need of growth more confidence in the faithfulness of God for the future of their church and that the effect of that divine perspective would be obvious to all the members of the respective churches in Jesus name amen

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