

# Hidden in Plain Sight

by C.J. Mahaney

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of keeping the focus on the cross of Christ and the gospel in our lives, and how this can help us avoid misunderstanding and misapplying the doctrine of sin.*

**Duration:** 47:19

**Scripture:** Genesis 3:15, Exodus 12:13, Leviticus 16:15-16, Psalm 22:1, Isaiah 53:5, Matthew 27:51, John 3:16

**Topics:** "Christian Life"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher starts by sharing a story about a world-famous violinist, Joshua Bell, who played in a subway station and went largely unnoticed. This story serves as an analogy to highlight how Jesus, the Savior, was also hidden in plain sight during his crucifixion. The preacher emphasizes the immense love of God displayed through Jesus' sacrifice on the cross, where he endured God's wrath for our sins. The sermon encourages the listeners to never lose sight of the Gospel and recommends several books that can help deepen their understanding of Calvary and the message of salvation.

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## Transcript

Joshua Bell emerged from the metro and positioned himself against a wall. By most measures, he was nondescript, a youngish white man in jeans, a long-sleeved t-shirt, and a Washington Nationals baseball cap. From a small case, he removed a violin.

Placing the open case at his feet, he shrewdly threw in a few dollars and pocket change as seed money and began to play. For the next 45 minutes in the DC metro on January 12, 2001, Bell played Mozart and Schubert as over 1,000 people streamed by, most hardly taking notice. If they would have, they might have recognized the young man for the world-renowned violinist he is.

They also may have noted the violin he played, a rare Stradivari worth over \$3 million. It was all part of a project arranged by the Washington Post, quote, an experiment in context, perception, and priorities, as well as an unblinking assessment of public taste. Just three days later, Joshua Bell sold out Boston Symphony Hall with ordinary seats going for \$100.

In the subway, Bell garnered about \$32 from the 27 people who stopped long enough to give a donation. World-famous violinist Joshua Bell was playing a \$3 million Stradivari outside the DC metro where he was largely unnoticed and completely unrecognized. The man was hidden in plain sight.

Hidden in plain sight. It's quite possible for us to read the final verse of 2 Corinthians this morning and not perceive what is hidden in plain sight, not perceive the wealth, the wealth of God-glorifying, grace-magnifying, life-transforming truth present in this passage. I think many of us have a tendency to neglect or overlook the concluding words of this letter and the other New Testament letters as well.

We tend to read the concluding words of a New Testament letter quickly rather than carefully. We erroneously assume that these words are a mere formality or simply an expression of ancient etiquette. We give these words, in effect, the same attention.

We give the parting words of a friend at the conclusion of a meal or conversation. Let's be clear this morning. These words are not a mere expression of ancient etiquette.

These words are divinely inspired. These words have been preserved with a divine intention for our lives on this day in particular. These words are divinely inspired and they are no less inspired than the main body of this letter.

Gordon Fee hasn't neglected or overlooked this benediction and in his commentary on 2 Corinthians he writes, in many ways this benediction is the most profound theological moment in the Pauline corpus. It is not difficult to see why such a profound moment of theology in the form of a prayer for the Corinthians should be the single most appropriate way to conclude this letter. What Paul wishes for them is all of this, all of this and nothing less.

All of this and nothing less. So what is hidden in plain sight in this concluding verse of 2 Corinthians? Here's what's hidden in plain sight. In this passage, Paul reveals God's heart toward us and his purpose for us.

That's what's hidden in plain sight. Hidden in plain sight within this passage is God's heart toward us and his purpose for us. Hidden within plain sight in this passage is the intention of God for our lives.

Hidden within plain sight, hidden in plain sight within this passage is the ambition of God for our lives. And please do not misunderstand, this isn't a mere aspiration of God. No, this is the fixed purpose of God for our lives.

This is his fixed purpose. He is intent on fulfilling this purpose. Ultimately, this purpose cannot be frustrated and this verse reveals his ambitious work in the lives of all those who have turned from their sin and trusted in the Savior.

That's what's hidden in plain sight in this passage and an awareness of what's hidden should build within us anticipation and expectation as we study this passage for this is what we can look forward to experiencing in our Christian lives for this is the intention of God toward his people and his purpose will not be frustrated in the lives of his people. That's what we learn. Let's contemplate what is hidden in plain sight.

Number one, the grace, the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is something immediately striking about the order of the Trinity presented in this verse. Paul begins with a reference to the Lord Jesus Christ.

He then draws our attention to God the Father and concludes with a reference to God the Holy Spirit. One might assume, one would assume that he would begin with a reference to God the Father. Why, why does

he begin with a reference to the grace of God the Son? Well, he begins with a reference to the grace of God the Son because this verse is not meant to function as a description of the relationships within the Trinity.

This verse actually describes the chronological order of our experience of the Trinity and our experience of the Trinity begins with the person and work of the Son of God. This is true at conversion and this remains true throughout the Christian life. All of the mercy, all of the grace that come to the Christian, all of the blessings that a Christian receives in this life and throughout eternity come through the person and work of Jesus Christ.

So actually, it's no surprise that Paul begins in this closing verse with a reference to the grace of God, with a reference in effect to the gospel and a reference to the grace of God revealed in and through the gospel. It is no surprise that Paul begins with a reference to the gospel of grace because that's always where Paul begins. Paul always begins with a reference to the gospel because Paul is gospel centered.

He is cross centered and he is consistently reminding the Corinthians about the content and the centrality of the gospel. This was how he began 1 Corinthians in chapter 2, verse 2, he writes, for I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. He concludes 1 Corinthians with this statement in chapter 15, verse 3, for I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures.

And this is how he continues in 2 Corinthians, where we read in chapter 8, for you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich. And this is how he ends 2 Corinthians. Paul never assumes the gospel, never.

He never assumes the gospel. He will not let the Corinthians drift from the gospel right up until the very last words of this letter. The man is about the gospel.

I am so grateful that our pastors are emulating Paul's example. Aren't you grateful? Aren't you grateful that our pastors in Covenant Life Church never assume the gospel? I'm so grateful that our never assume the gospel. I'm so grateful that our pastors never assume that we understand the gospel sufficiently.

I'm so grateful, I know you share this gratefulness, that our pastors are committed to the primacy of the gospel and that they will not allow us to drift from the gospel. They never address a topic without explaining how that topic is derived from the gospel, how that topic is related to the gospel. It is this gospel of the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ that informs every aspect of pastoral ministry in this church.

And every aspect of this church is rooted in the gospel. Each and every ministry in this church is, in effect, a means of encountering and experiencing the gospel. Sunday celebration, the married life ministry, 1, 1031, care groups, ministry teams, covenant life school, and that is just a representative, not an exhaustive list.

Every ministry in this church and every meeting that takes place in this church is informed by the gospel, is rooted in the gospel, and exists as a means of experiencing the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. So, oh yes, that's a very appropriate place to applause. I'm giving thanks to God and expressing your appreciation for the pastors of this church and the way they serve and lead.

So, if we are clear on the primacy of the gospel, if we are clear on the content of the gospel, if our pastors are emulating the example of Paul and his gospel-centered pastoral ministry, why does the experience of

grace referenced by Paul in this passage, why does the experience of grace at times seem so elusive to us? Why is maintaining an awareness of grace so difficult? Why? Why am I often more aware of my sin than His amazing grace? Why? Why is there ever the absence of joy in my life given the existence of grace? Why? Well, let me suggest just one possible reason why for your consideration. A reason we might not consistently experience and enjoy the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ is because we so easily misunderstand and misapply the doctrine of sin. A reason we might not consistently experience and enjoy the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ is because we so easily misunderstand and misapply the doctrine of sin.

Now, at this point, I'm at risk of being misunderstood, so please allow me to make a few qualifying statements about the doctrine of sin and in support of the doctrine of sin because in this church we love the doctrine of sin and it is a gift from God to us when understood and applied accurately and appropriately. So, in covenant life, we unapologetically, and I trust humbly, teach the doctrine of sin as revealed in and throughout Scripture. We must never ignore sin.

We must never avoid addressing sin. We must never minimize sin or the seriousness of sin in relation to the holiness of God. One cannot truly proclaim the gospel of grace without addressing sin and only those who are aware of their sin will be amazed by the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Thomas Watson said, till sin be bitter, Christ and grace will never be sweet. So, the doctrine of sin is not optional. The doctrine of sin is essential.

The doctrine of sin is a critical and invaluable means of understanding our need for grace, but if you study and apply the doctrine of sin apart from the gospel of grace, you'll end up more aware of your sin than you are amazed by His grace. I would like to address this morning and care for those who possibly have misunderstood the doctrine of sin or sincerely misapplied the doctrine of sin and find themselves too often more aware of their sin than they are the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. From my observation and experience of what appears to be now the past 25, 35 years of pastoral ministry, I think this is a common tendency, a common tendency, a common tendency and temptation.

And I think Sinclair Ferguson, who's one of my favorite authors, and if you make your way to the bookstore after the meeting, it is really peppered with books by Sinclair Ferguson. I think Sinclair Ferguson really captures this tendency and temptation when he writes the following. Only by seeing our sin do we come to see the need and wonder of grace.

There you see the doctrine of sin is essential and not optional. But then he continues, but exposing sin is not the same as unveiling and applying grace. No, it's not.

The truth to tell, exposing sin is easier than applying grace. Alas, we are more intimate with the former than we sometimes are with the latter. And therein lies our weakness.

We we must address and expose sin. It's only by seeing our sin that we come to see the need and the wonder of the grace of God. But exposing sin is not the same.

Exposing sin is not the same as unveiling and applying grace. And exposing sin is easier than unveiling and applying grace. So exposing sin is not optional, but neither is it sufficient.

And exposing sin is not the same as unveiling and applying grace. It is possible to expose sin and fail to unveil grace. It is possible to address sin without applying grace.

And to expose sin without unveiling and applying grace is a misunderstanding and misapplication of the doctrine of sin. So how can we avoid, how can we avoid a misunderstanding and misapplication of the doctrine of sin? How can we avoid merely exposing sin? How can we avoid simply or solely exposing sin? How can we unveil and apply the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ? Here's how. Never lose sight of Calvary.

That's how. That's how we avoid a misunderstanding or misapplication of the doctrine of sin. That's how we can unveil and apply the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Never, never lose sight of Calvary. In his excellent book, *A Quest for Godliness*, I came across the following insight provided by its author, J.I. Packer. He's, in this particular quote, he's writing to pastors and he's drawing attention to the example of the Puritans, but his point is applicable to everyone present here.

Mr. Packer writes the following, the preacher's commission is to declare the whole counsel of God, but the cross is the center of that counsel. And the Puritans knew that the traveler through the Bible landscape misses his way as soon as he loses sight of a hill called Calvary. Oh, how, how do we avoid the temptation and tendency to misunderstand and misapply the doctrine of sin? Never lose sight of Calvary.

How can we unveil and apply the grace of God to our lives? Never lose sight of Calvary, never lose sight of Calvary and never forget what the savior accomplished on that holy hill for there. He satisfied the wrath of God and he secured forgiveness of sins for all who turn from their sin and trust in the savior there we receive. And because of what he did there, forgiveness of sin there, we are free from fear of future condemnation and wrath there.

He addressed the penalty of sin and the power of sin. And one day the very presence of sin there provided for us is justification and redemption and reconciliation there on that holy hill. So lose sight of that hill.

Never. That's how, that's how we avoid misunderstanding and misapplying the doctrine of sin. That's how we unveil and apply grace.

So when you are examining your heart before God and in relation to God, never lose sight of Calvary in the process. And when you are convicted of sin, never lose sight of Calvary. And when you confess your sin to God or where and when appropriate to others, never lose sight of Calvary.

And when you correct someone else because of their sin, never lose sight of Calvary and never let them lose sight of Calvary. Because if you lose sight of Calvary, all you'll be aware of is sin. If we lose sight of Calvary, all we are aware of is our sin.

All you'll be aware of is your sin and the sin of your spouse and the sin of your children and the sin of the members of this church. That's all you will be aware of. And you will be some odd mixture of paralyzed by condemnation and self-righteous sinful judgment toward others.

If you lose sight of Calvary, lose sight of Calvary. Now let's just all acknowledge it's easy to lose sight of Calvary. It's easy.

We find it, I find it so easy to lose sight of Calvary. So I'm going to just recommend you put certain non-meritorious practices in place, a specific means of grace, not a means of merit, that will position you to experience grace, particularly in the form of reading. And so we have books to recommend and books for you to buy and books for you to encounter the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let me just from the outset recommend these. For the Love of God, two volume series by Dr. Carson. Listen, for your daily reading of scripture as you seek to make your way through the entirety of the Bible, Genesis to Revelation, chapter after chapter after chapter.

I know of no better scholar to take you by the hand and in each and every chapter. Dr. Carson will not let you lose sight of Calvary. No matter where you are reading in your Bible, no matter how obscure the passage seems to be, there will be a sighting of Calvary and he will train you so that you can have your own sightings of Calvary.

You'll know what to look for. Never lose sight of Calvary. And then to supplement your diet of scripture.

Well, we just happen to have a few things to recommend. Start with one. Don't be overwhelmed.

You don't have to purchase them all, but buy something. Get started with some one of these books. Jerry Bridges, two contributions that are just excellent.

The discipline of grace, first three chapters in particular related to the subject that I'm teaching on today. Read it, reread it, reread it for the rest of your life. You will never lose sight of Calvary.

And he also has the gospel for real life. And this will help you never lose sight of Calvary. John Piper has made a wonderful contribution in the form of the passion of Jesus Christ and a book you might not be aware of the message of salvation by Phil Riken will also aid you in never losing sight of the gospel.

And this little book appears in the bookstore. I hope they appear. These might all be gone since I did this previous.

And if so, when you're in the bookstore looking for this, never lose sight of Calvary because they will order this for you next week. All right. But a gospel primer is the best little book I have read in how to apply the gospel to your life, how to preach the gospel to yourself each and every day.

And then for advanced reading for our advanced readers, I want to recommend these two books. One is called Pierce for our transgressions. This is called the cross of Christ by John Stott for our advanced readers.

Those are all there. Listen, why, why read this stuff? Here's why. Let me tell you why we easily lose sight of Holy scripture first and foremost, and books like this protect us from losing sight.

And there is a relationship between. It's a relationship between thinking and feeling. I'm often approached by people who will say, I want to be affected by the cross.

And they will ask very humbly, how are you affected by the cross at times when I see you or hear you, you have, you are overwhelmed with emotion as you contemplate the savior's sacrifice. I want to experience that. And it's not like I have some special, unique experience that isn't applicable or available to all.

And so what I say is I can give you great hope. I can give you great hope because there is a relationship between thinking and feeling. There is a relationship between reading and thinking and feeling.

You see, what most of us want is an effortless experience. We want to feel without thinking. We want to experience without reading, but the means of this experience is the mind, a theologically informed mind, a mind that is cross centered.

And so as you take advantage of these materials, what will happen to you is by the illuminating work of the spirit, as you read, you will be thinking. And as you think you will meditate and you will find yourself surveying the wondrous cross on which the prince of glory died. And within your soul will be created fresh affections for the savior and fresh appreciation for his sacrifice for your sins.

You will know increasing amazement as you contemplate the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. So that's why I want to bring these materials to your attention. They can help position you so that you can experience this wonderful gift of illumination so that it is no longer hidden in plain sight.

See, Paul never lost sight of Calvary. He never lost sight of Calvary. And that's, that's, that's obvious in this particular passage.

The man was more aware of grace than sin. He was more aware of the grace of God, present and active in the Corinthians and available to the Corinthians than he was the sin of the Corinthians. If you even do a casual reading through second Corinthians, what you will find is second Corinthians is Paul's most passionate letter.

His most passionate letter in the second Corinthians is, is Paul's. This letter is filled with self-disclosure that is found nowhere else in Paul's writing. So it's this passionate letter.

It's, there's this unique aspect of self-disclosure in this particular letter. It, it is his most confrontational letter in and throughout the letter. He is exhorting.

He is teaching. He is rebuking. He is appealing.

He is attacking. He is admonishing. And in spite of all the deficiencies of the Corinthian church, in spite of all the work still needing to be done in the Corinthian church, he ends the letter with this benediction, the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

So we have to ask ourselves as we go through our day, which are we, which are we more aware, grace or sin? Secondly, hidden in plain sight is the love of God, the love of God. I'm going to make one abbreviated point here. There are actually two points to make, but the second one, I'm going to have the sweet joy of being with you in a few weeks and I'm going to address the second one.

So let me just make one and let me do so briefly. The love of God. Clearly, clearly in this phrase, Paul has in mind God's love for us, not our love for God.

In verse 11, he references the God of love in his outstanding book, knowing God, J. I. Packer writes that the new Testament gives us two yardsticks for measuring God's love. Two yardsticks. The first is the cross and the second is the gift of sonship.

I'm going to briefly make reference to the cross. And then in a few weeks, I will have the privilege and joy of addressing you on the gift of sonship or adoption. What we're, what we're trying to, you know, we're trying to do right now.

We're trying to measure the, we are trying to measure the immeasurable and Mr. Packer points out, well, there's two yardsticks for measuring the immeasurable. There's two yardsticks in scripture, in the new Testament for measuring the immeasurable for measuring God's love. And the first is the cross.

The first is the cross. And scripture is clear that God, the father's love for sinners like you and me is supremely demonstrated in and through the cross that God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. The father's love cannot be understood apart from the cross and must never be separated from the cross.

And we, we must be clear that the father's love for sinners like you and me preceded the cross and was in effect, the divine motivation for the cross. So John Stott helpfully writes at this point, it cannot be emphasized too strongly that God's love is the source, not the consequence of the atonement. God does not love us because Christ died for us.

Christ died for us because God loved us. It is, if it is God's wrath, which needed to be propitiated, it is God's love, which did the propitiating. It was the love of God, the father for sinners, richly deserving his righteous wrath that initiated the plan to send and sacrifice his son as our substitute, thus satisfying the wrath of God and revealing the love of the father.

The cross is not the son's attempt to placate the angry father. We must never leave the impression that it was the loving son on the cross, placating the angry father. Instead, we must understand that before the cross and behind the cross and through the cross, the love of God, the father is revealed to us.

And on that cross, his love was on full display. He so, he so loved sinners like you and me that he sent his only innocent son. He sent him to the cross.

He crushed him with the weight of our sin and his righteous wrath against our sin. He crushed him as the savior experienced over a hours, God's righteous wrath against our sins. He became humanly a bloody mass hanging suspended between heaven and earth.

And at one point breaking the silence with the most agonizing cry ever uttered in all history. My God, my God, why do you forsaken me? In that moment, heaven was silent, but scripture isn't silent. Why son? Because I so love the world.

Sinclair Ferguson wrote of this love, this love of the father revealed in the cross. When we think of Christ dying on the cross, we are shown the lengths to which God's love goes in order to win us back to himself. We would almost think that God loved us more than he loves his son.

We cannot measure such love by any other standard. He is saying to us, the father is saying to us, I love you this much. The cross is the heart of the gospel.

It makes the gospel good news. Christ died for us. He has stood in our place before God's judgment seat.

He has borne our sins. God has done something on the cross. We could never do for ourselves, but God does something to us as well as for us through the cross.

What does he do to us as well as for us? Well, here's what he does to us. He persuades us that he loves us. See, we referenced earlier what he did for us.

Now we are referencing what he has done to us. And through the cross, the father reveals his love for us. Through the cross, he persuades.

Are you convinced? If you are not, let me ask you, what's it going to take to convince you? If I'm going to persuade somebody of the love of God the father, for them as a sinner, I take them to the cross, where

together we try to measure the immeasurable. Finally, what's hidden in plain sight in this passage? The fellowship of the Holy Spirit. And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Paul desires that the Corinthians would continue to grow in their relationship with and experience of the Holy Spirit. He desires that they have a continuing partaking of the Spirit, participation with the Spirit, a life marked by the Spirit. And the desire of your pastors is no different.

So how can we just briefly apply this passage to our lives, this part of this benediction to our lives? Number one, it is imperative that we remain dependent upon the Holy Spirit and never cease pursuing the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. As individuals and as a church, we must continue to grow in our dependence upon the Holy Spirit and in our eagerness to experience the many gifts of the Spirit that are all defined and described in Holy Scripture. So Scripture does not permit us to merely affirm, affirm the person and work of the Holy Spirit.

No, we are called to experience all the empowering Spirit provides for sanctification and service. So we're called to grow in our relationship with the Spirit. We're called to eagerly desire the gifts of the Spirit, to pursue the practice of the gifts of the Spirit, and to experience the power and the presence of the Holy Spirit governed by Scripture, governed by Scripture as the ultimate authority.

It is our intention to do just this for the edification of the church and ultimately for the glory of God. Point one. Point two, it is imperative that we understand the breadth and diversity of the Spirit's work.

It is imperative that we understand both the breadth and the diversity of the Spirit's work. I think in his book, *God's Empowering Presence*, I think Gordon Fee got it right in his insightful summation statement of Paul's understanding of the person and work of the Spirit. He writes the following.

In Paul, after studying all of Paul's writings, he comes to this conclusion. In Paul, power is not to be thought of merely in terms of the miraculous, the extraordinary. No, Paul understood the Spirit's power in the broadest possible way.

He understood the Spirit's power in the broadest, not the narrowest, but in the broadest possible way. The work of the Spirit is diverse, and the work of the Spirit is broad, and that's evident with even a casual reading of 1 and 2 Corinthians. Listen, the Corinthians didn't understand the Spirit's power in the broadest possible way.

They did not. The Corinthians had a singular fascination with the gift of tongues. They had a singular fascination with the gift of tongues, and they assign exaggerated importance or significance to the gift of tongues.

They thought of themselves, their self-assessment of themselves was that they were a people of the Spirit. They were a people of the Spirit because of the spectacular, the extraordinary. They were a people of the Spirit because they spoke in tongues.

And 1 Corinthians in particular, 12, 13, and 14 is, to say the least, an adjustment of the Corinthians. Here, this church thought of themselves as a people of the Spirit, and they lacked the primary evidence of the Spirit, which is love. So as we heard recently in Joshua's excellent sermon on 1 Corinthians 13, he, by the way, that whole chapter was a rebuke.

That's what that was. When that, listen, when that was first read, it was not received as, as, oh, this will be helpful for weddings. We have needed something.

Something's, something's always been lacking at weddings, and now we, we have the exact words fit for the occasion. That's not what's taking place. The entire chapter is a corrective.

These individuals who thought of themselves as a people of the Spirit, because of their identification and participation in the gift of tongues, are being corrected and adjusted by Paul that they in fact lack a primary evidence of the Spirit, love. And then in chapter 12, he gives them two lists, two lists. Lists aren't exhaustive, but they are representative.

And what you want to know, if you look there later on today or sometime this week, that in both those lists, the last gift in each list is tongues. The last gift in each list is tongues. And he intentionally places tongues on, intentionally places tongues last on each list, not because tongues was the least of the gifts, but because for the Corinthians, speaking in tongues had become the most important gift.

So we want to do all we can to avoid the example of the Corinthian church in relation to the person and work of the Spirit. We want to avoid in covenant life and sovereign grace, a pronounced enthusiasm for a particular gift. We want to avoid that.

We want to avoid a singular emphasis on a particular gift. And we want to cultivate and celebrate the broad work of the Spirit as defined and described in scripture. Now, from my vantage point and my perspective, I don't think we are vulnerable to a single fascination with the gift of tongues.

But I think we can be at times, or some can be at times, vulnerable to a singular fascination with the gift of prophecy. Qualifying statement, grateful for the gift of prophecy. Grateful for what we experienced of the gift of prophecy already in this meeting and the edification upon our souls from the proper execution, the humble execution governed by scripture related to that gift.

Grateful for that gift. Eagerly desire that gift. May we develop that gift without isolating that gift as the essence of being charismatic and conclude that if that gift isn't primary, you aren't charismatic because that would be completely erroneous.

And I would say in my early years participating in the charismatic movement, that would be a deficiency. It was a deficiency in teaching. See, I would say if you look way back, so far back, it would test the powers of your imagination.

So far back I had hair, okay? That's how far back I'm going right now. When I look that far back and think that far back, I can remember concluding. We basically, I think, had two categories.

One was the spectacular and one was the speech gifts. Two categories. And that was our definition of charismatic.

Now, as they say in the NFL, upon further review, upon further study and upon further reading, I have come to realize that no, in Paul, he doesn't define power solely or simply as extraordinary and spectacular. No. He defines power in the, power of the spirit in the broadest way possible.

Paul is a man aware of evidences of grace. Actually, I'd argue today I'm more charismatic than ever. I am, because I'm more aware of the spirit's work.

Wasn't as aware years ago, many years ago. Only had two categories I was working with. Spectacular and speech.

And if those weren't working, then God wasn't present. Oh, what a fool. I mean, I was a lovable fool and a well-meaning fool, ignorant fool, but I was a fool.

You know, to some degree, what I was like? I was Corinthian-like. I don't want to be conformed to the Corinthian church. We don't want to be conformed to the Corinthian church.

We don't want an emphasis on a particular gift to maximize, to in any way minimize rather, our appreciation for the broad work of the spirit. We want the fullness of the spirit. We want the broad work of the spirit.

We want every gift of the spirit and we want to avoid emulating the example of the Corinthians in relation to the gifts of the spirit. We don't want an emphasis on any one gift to minimize our appreciation and cultivation of all the gifts. And then finally, this is just, this has to be said, but I can say it in one paragraph.

It is imperative that we understand the ultimate priority of the spirit's work. Because the ultimate priority or the primary role of the Holy Spirit is not to reveal the gift. The primary role of the Holy Spirit is to reveal the Savior and to testify to the gospel.

Holy Spirit first and foremost testifies to the gospel and brings into our lives the blessing of the gospel. So our understanding of the person and work of the Holy Spirit, our pneumatology, should never take precedence over the gospel and in effect cannot be understood apart from the gospel. And so we want to avoid the erroneous definition of spirituality that characterized the Corinthian church.

And I close with a wonderful, wonderful quote from Don Carson, as he elaborates on Paul's in effect, redefining maturity for the Corinthians in both first and second Corinthians. Mr. Carson wrote what it means to be spiritual is profoundly tied to the cross and nothing else more precisely to be spiritual in this passage is to enjoy the gift of the Holy Spirit. And this means understanding and appropriating the message of the cross.

God's secret wisdom, those who are most mature are most grateful for the cross and keep coming back to it as the measure of God's love for them and the supreme standard for self-denial. I do not consider myself mature, but I do believe that those who are most mature are most grateful for the cross and keep coming back, keep coming back to it. And since I want to be mature, that's what I'm going to do.

Let's do it together. May, may, may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy spirit be with you all. May you all experience all of this and nothing less.

Amen.

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