

The Character, Power and Ambition of Christ

by David Smithers

The sermon emphasizes the importance of living for the glory of God, pursuing godly character, and depending on the power of the Spirit of God in our lives.

Duration: 47:11

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Luke 24:46, Luke 24:49

Topics: "Christian Character", "Evangelism"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of being balanced and focused in our walk with God. He highlights three key aspects: the character, power, and ambition of Christ. The speaker notes that some believers who focus on personal holiness may neglect the mission of evangelizing the lost. He encourages believers to understand and embrace the ambition of Christ, which is to spread the gospel to every nation. The speaker concludes by urging believers to stay focused and balanced in their pursuit of God, holding onto fundamental truths and not being easily swayed.

Transcript

It's good to be here with you guys. I just wanted to share a few things that I believe will be helpful to you as kind of guideposts or anchors for just your devotion to Jesus, but let's first, before we jump into this stuff, hopefully I can find my notes here if they're someplace, but let's just pray and ask the Lord just to bless our time together, amen? Lord, we're just so thankful for your presence here. We're just grateful for this opportunity to come together.

We thank you for your peace, God, that surpasses all understanding. We thank you for rest and assurance in you, Lord Jesus, your goodness that you bestow upon us each and every day. Father, I just pray that you'd help us, you'd be with us here this evening, you'd make the material concise and clear and make sense, and God, help it to penetrate, God, to be effective, to stick in people's minds and hearts, something they can retain, they can go away with, Lord, this evening, that it would be a handle to just steady and stabilize their walk with you in these days and in the days to come.

God, I just pray that you'd help us to be well-balanced and focused people, Lord, on you, in Jesus' name, amen. Thank you. Okay, got it here someplace, here it is.

You know, so often we're in our pursuit of the Lord, we'll reach and get excited about something new that God's doing in our life, and we'll reach for something fresh over here, but often times it's at the expense of

something in the past that we have grabbed onto, and so we find ourselves trading one thing for another a lot of times, you know, there's a season in our life where we're really excited about God doing one kind of thing, and we're kind of focused on this, and in our enthusiasm over something new, often times we forget something that was so necessary in maybe last year or in our previous season, amen? Proverbs, excuse me, not Proverbs, but Ecclesiastes says that a wise man reaches for one thing without letting go of another. He reaches for one thing without letting go of another, and this is very, very important in our Christian walk, that as we pursue certain things, that we hold things together, amen? And I want to talk about some principles, some values, some goals and purposes in our Christian life and in our walk that are important that we keep them in balance, one with another, that we retain them simultaneously, and they will naturally bring some balance and perspective to our Christian walk. So number one, let's define real quickly what our primary purpose is.

So often when we first come to the Lord Jesus Christ, we kind of pursue the Lord out of a sense of self-preservation, amen? We seek salvation, we seek the gospel, we seek the Lord to kind of keep our fat out of the fire, you know what I mean? And that's understandable, that's totally understandable, and that is an acceptable motivation as prescribed in the Scriptures, but I would say that it is a primary motivation and probably an immature motivation when we first seek the Lord. But as we seek the Lord and grow in the grace of God, our motivation for pursuing the Lord is to move beyond just self-preservation and just what we get out of it to a place where we start to be motivated by God's glory, by God's honor, God's worship, and what God gets out of it, amen? Does that make sense to you guys? And so much of what's presented in the church today is all focused around us, but if we're going to be the people that God wants us to be, we've got to start thinking, what does the Lord want to get out of this thing? Colossians tells us that all things were created by Him and for Him. We have been created for the glory and the pleasure of God, and that's our primary purpose, that's our primary goal as a maturing saint of God, is to exist and live for God's glory and God's pleasure, amen? It tells us in Hebrews 11, 6, that apart from faith, it is impossible to please Him.

A lot of times we focus on the whole faith scenario there in Hebrews 11, but I love to focus on the fact that God in a very direct way has communicated through the epistle to the Hebrews that we as the saints of God have, by our faith in Jesus Christ, have the capacity to please God, amen? Well, there's a little obscure verse that talks about the temple of God, the house of God, being for God's pleasure and not for ours, and that's found in 1 Chronicles 29, 1. And again, it's an obscure passage, but I love it. I love how clearly it communicates what this whole thing is supposed to be about. Now, let me give you a little bit of a backdrop, the context of the situation.

David, King David, is aged. He's growing old. He recognizes his time is soon to be past and that he's passing off the scene and he's passing the torch, if you will, to his son Solomon.

And David has desired to build a house, the house of God, prepare a dwelling place for the Lord, but God has not permitted him to build this tabernacle, but he has prepared all the articles, all the building supplies for that house to be erected, and he's passing these on with the throne that he is passing on to Solomon. He is also passing on a vision for the house of God and the actual materials to erect this house of God. But in doing so, as he's doing, passing these things on to Solomon, he defines for us the purpose of the house of God.

Now, David is talking about a literal, physical tabernacle. Of course, we're this evening are talking about a spiritual house, which we are the living stones that make up that house. Amen.

But the purpose is the same. Just as the original tabernacle of God or the temple of God had a unique purpose being for God's glory, so we as the assembled saints have that same purpose. But in 1 Chronicles 29, part B, it says, and the work is great.

This thing that we're involved in is a great task. It's a lofty task. It's an insurmountable task.

In our own strength, we can't do it. It's a huge task becoming the house of God, the people of God. And the work is great because the temple is not for man, but for the Lord God.

Amen. If we're just doing this thing to make each other happy and to make a comfortable place for us, it would be relatively easy to accomplish. But when we understand that our purpose and pursuit is for God's glory and coming together is for the Lord's sake.

Amen. David talks about the temple again in 1 Chronicles 22, and he reminds us of his heart, why he's wanting to see the house of God come together. 1 Chronicles 22, and I had in my heart to build a house of rest for the ark of the covenant of the Lord and for the footstool of our God and had made preparations to build it.

David is hungry. He's jealous. He's desiring that there be a place where the presence of God can rest.

A footstool, if you will. Now, Wendy, if you were to have a guest at your house and you were to pull out a footstool, what would that imply? You were trying to make somebody comfortable. Amen.

You're trying to be a blessing to someone. You're trying to make them as comfortable as possible in that setting. This is David's heart.

Prior to this, there had been a tabernacle where the ark of God had been housed in a tent that was very mobile that could be moved here or there, wherever the people of God wanted to go, wherever there was trouble, they could bring the ark. But David wanted there to be a fixed place where God's presence could rest, where he could be blessed. And I really believe that this illustrates for us somewhat of the transition that a believer goes through from their primary motivation to a more mature motivation.

So often in our early stages of our Christianity, wherever trouble were to pop up in our life, wherever we're going, whatever we want to do, we kind of try to drag God along with that. Amen. We try to apply him to wherever we have a felt need.

But there comes a place in every believer's life as their motivations mature where they understand that God isn't to revolve around our life, but rather our life, our purpose, our calling, our vision. All that we are and all that we've been created to be is to revolve around God rather than God revolve around us. Amen.

So we don't want to drag God along with us. Rather, our life, he is the one stability. He's the one anchor that our life revolves around.

And that's a good question to ask yourself. Are you trying to drag God along with you? Apply him to the places you just feel like you need help? Or are you trying to let him be the center that your life revolves around? Amen. Let's recap a little bit at this platform of worship that David is so hungry to create.

Psalms 99.5, Exalt the Lord our God and worship at his footstool. He is holy. Psalms 132, verse 7, Let us go into the tabernacle.

Let us worship at his footstool. This is all about worship. Amen.

I hope you're not weary with what we were doing this evening. I hope this doesn't tax your attention and your energies. I mean, you know, we're all tempted at times maybe to, you know, think of those little things in an extended time of worship.

Like, you know, what am I doing? Why are we here? You know, why is this taking so long? And you guys, this is a good thing to reflect on in times like this and to remind ourselves this whole thing that we call worship is not about what we get out of it, but rather what God gets out of it. Amen. Worship is for him, not for us.

We get blessed when we worship. God touches us and gives us perspective and insight and does many different things for us as we worship the Lord. But you guys, when we worship, it's primarily for the Lord Jesus Christ.

First and foremost, if you're going to stay on the path that God has laid out before you, you've got to be a worshiper. You've got to be a person who grows into a motivation that says, my life will revolve around the Lord. Rather, I'm not going to try to make God revolve around me.

Amen. This is a great task because the temple is not for man, but for the Lord God. So, all that we're trying to do here, I believe, like David before us, is to establish a footstool, a place where God can be worshipped, where God can be adored, where we can think first about Jesus rather than first about ourselves.

Amen. And if you will, I'd like to create a little bit of an analogy here. This footstool that establishes a platform on which God can accurately be worshipped is held up by three legs, three primary values.

That keep things in balance and keep things in perspective. Now, I'm talking about some goals tonight, and this is not an exhaustive list of things that a believer needs in his life to stay well balanced. But what I have found that there are certain primary values, certain primary commitments that need to be held in unison together to keep us on target.

Amen. You go to a lot of churches these days and they really emphasize worship. You ever notice that? Worship is a big deal, but a lot of times it is at the expense of the Word of God.

You go to other churches and the Word is really strong, it's good, a good exposition, good exegesis going on, but worship, you kind of get the short end of the stick. You know what I'm talking about? You go other places, maybe they really emphasize the Spirit of God, letting the Spirit have His way in your life. But a lot of times it may be at the expense of godly character, or maybe it's at the expense of evangelism.

You guys know what I'm talking about? Some of the churches that are the most evangelical put the least emphasis on worship or on the power of God's Spirit, which is the only way by which we really impact. I mean, the Spirit is given so we can worship, and so we can make an impact on people's lives with the Gospel. Amen.

So what we're talking about here again is we understand that our primary purpose is to live for the glory of God, to live for His pleasure, for His sake, for His delight, for His worship. But there are certain things that help us stay focused, that help us stay balanced in this pursuit. And I don't know about you, but I want to be the kind of believer that hangs on to one thing or two things to the good things that God has put before

us, and I don't let go of something because I'm pursuing something over here.

Amen? How about you? You want to be somebody who is balanced in the faith, that hangs on to some fundamental truths, that doesn't feel like you have to swap and trade all the time. Amen? Well, let's talk about the first one of these three legs, if you will. And again, if you get freaked out or it seems strange, my analogy, just push that out of your mind.

I'm talking about some values here, some characteristics that we need in our life. Number one, the character of Christ. The character of Christ.

To understand Christ accurately, that He is holy God, He is almighty God, He is sovereign King of the universe, that first and foremost, He is a holy God. Amen? That dwells in holiness and majesty. And He has sent His Son, the Father has sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to die on a cross, to be a substitute for us, to redeem us, to purchase us back for our original intent and purpose, and that is for God's glory.

But in doing so, He has not only imputed righteousness to us, but actually put within us a capacity to walk in His footsteps and become righteous ourselves. Amen? To walk and pursue godly character. If you're going to be a well-balanced, maturing saint of God, you've got to be someone who pursues holiness.

Amen? Make sense? The first and foremost of the goals and values that we're talking about tonight, in our intimate desire to know Jesus more and to represent Him accurately, is to walk in love, holiness, and compassion, and a purity of life. Now, you guys, I don't know how this ever happened, but somewhere along the line, when people started talking about purity and holiness, they started to separate that from love and compassion. But the truth and the reality is that in pure character and in godliness always comes love and compassion and mercy.

Amen? So when we're talking about the character of Christ that we're pursuing, we're talking about living a life that is free from the things that put other people in bondage. You know, the world that doesn't know Jesus. But in that pursuit of godly character will always, always come compassion, mercy, and grace.

Amen? So let's continue. Let me continue reading on here. We as a community of believers are the only physical representation of Jesus the world will ever see.

Therefore, we consider it not only our duty, but our privilege and solemn responsibility to seek to reflect Christ's glory and character through consistent lives of grace-filled victory over sin and selfishness. However, in this ongoing pursuit, we are determined to be ever mindful that there are some pitfalls that are associated with pursuing godly character. And in fact, some places, some churches and fellowships and organizations and ministries realize that sometimes in the pursuit of godly character and emphasizing godly character, there's some little backlash.

There's a little bit of pitfalls that come along with that. And so they kind of negate emphasizing this because they don't want to fall into those pitfalls of spiritual pride and legalism. Amen? But I'll tell you what.

In spite of the fact that there may be a tendency within some believers to be a little bit more legalistic or to be prideful over their pursuits and achievements and godliness, we still need godliness. Amen? Okay, so we don't deal with it by ignoring the whole issue. We've got to remedy this problem.

Amen? So let's talk first and foremost about the first caution. In our pursuit of seeking godly character, we must avoid spiritual pride being the pitfall of trusting in our own good works as a means of establishing assurance and confidence before God. You guys, we've got to beware that as we pursue and seek the Lord to be godly people, to be people that are not in bondage to sin, to be people who walk in compassion, grace, and mercy, that we don't get puffed up about our victories.

Amen? That we don't become prideful because of the change that is starting to develop in our life. Because you know what? We didn't do it. Amen? It's not by our own merit.

It's not by our own power or strength. It is only by the grace of God that we can have any kind of victory. Amen? That's a good place to say amen right there.

Amen? We cannot do it. It is the free gift of God. God's grace is God's unmerited favor, or how I like to define it, God's unmerited power to do and be anything and everything that God has called you to be.

Amen? It is not merely just grace and mercy after you've really messed up. Okay? The grace of God also is the power in the face of sin to say no. The power and victory to overcome besetting sins that used to hold you in bondage.

But we're not to grow boastful or prideful. The only thing that we have to boast in is in the cross of Jesus Christ, is in God's mercy and God's cross. Amen? Legalism.

A spirit of legalism. We've got to be careful about this. Legalism is a tendency to overemphasize various external standards and codes of conduct at the expense of putting the primary focus on the awakening of grace or the inner heart and character of a person.

Amen? You guys, we've got to be careful of gravitating towards what I like to call hemlines and hairdos. You know what I mean? Little external lists by which we evaluate one another's godliness. We've got to focus on the heart.

Amen? Does a person have a radically surrendered heart for Jesus? That's the important issue. The external stuff, you know, we may have varying opinions about what all that's supposed to look like. That will work itself out in time if the heart is surrendered to Jesus.

Amen? So as you see somebody come to Christ, don't put the emphasis on the external stuff unless we're talking about something obviously very blatant and dangerous, alright? But I'm talking about style issues, personality issues, preferences that one person has that is distinctive from another. Be careful, okay? Be careful about putting attention on that. Appeal to the heart.

Look at the heart. Encourage what's going on in here. Does that make sense to you guys? Godly character.

We've got to pursue it, but we've got to understand that in this pursuit of godly character, many have fallen into spiritual pride and a legalistic tendency that we're not going to run, we're not going to negate pursuing this character that we so definitely need that is commanded of us, but we're just going to be cautious and aware of the pitfalls. Okay, number two. The power of Christ.

The power of Christ. We talked about the character of Christ. How about the power of Christ? The power of the Spirit of Jesus Christ within us.

The power of the Spirit. You know, so often you can go to some places that they may emphasize godly character. They may emphasize evangelism or this or that, but they may not emphasize the Spirit of Christ.

The only way that we can be transformed, the only way that we can see this godly character worked out in our life is by God's Spirit. Amen? Grace is the source of the power that changes us, but it's by the Spirit that this thing is realized and worked out in our life day after day, moment by moment. Amen? Okay, another primary value that we need to have is our pursuit of more of God's Spirit in our life.

We need a dependence and a surrender to the power of the Spirit of God in our life in all of its biblical and various expressions. Amen? And I will put an emphasis on biblical expressions. We believe that through the power of the Holy Spirit comes the only means by which we can visibly release the love, character, and ministry of Jesus Christ.

You know, when God does a fresh work in your life, He transforms your heart. Where you used to be totally preoccupied with yourself and concerned about yourself, now you're living for God's glory, but you also start to become concerned about other people. You want to make an impact on other people's life.

Amen? You want to touch them. But it is by God's Spirit, it's got, excuse me, it's got by God's Spirit and various gifts that He may give to the different members of the body of Christ. It's by His Spirit that this character, this love, this compassion can be released.

Amen? We need the Spirit of God to release what God's doing in here. Amen? So we not only need character, we need God's Spirit. This is what I'm trying to emphasize.

But in our pursuit of having more of God's Spirit, or maybe a better way of saying is to be more surrendered to God's Spirit. Amen? I mean, at regeneration, at conversion, the Spirit of God came to dwell in us. Okay? In this temple right here.

But to the extent that the flesh has control of our life, our old man, as the Scripture refers to, the Spirit will not have sway in our life. So to the extent that we can reckon ourself dead as Romans 6 speaks about, and the old man be laid aside, and live by faith in what Christ did for us on the cross, the Spirit will be released to overflow in our life and for us to look more like Jesus. Amen? So you see, it's impossible for us, the character of Christ to be worked out in our life while the flesh is still in control because the Spirit is being held back by ungodly desires, by somebody else being in control, namely us.

But in our pursuit of having a life that is more controlled by the power of the Holy Spirit and its various and biblical manifestations and expressions, we must be careful not to give ourselves over to spiritual extremism. Spiritual extremism. What am I talking about? I'm talking about the tendency to focus on the gifts and demonstrations of the Holy Spirit at the expense of the Holy Spirit's primary goal of exalting the person and the preeminence of Jesus Christ.

There are some places that emphasize the Spirit over and over. The Holy Spirit this. The Holy Spirit that.

The Holy Spirit this. And the gifts this and that. You guys, if the Spirit of God is really in control, you know what people are going to be talking about? Jesus.

Because the vocabulary of the Holy Spirit is the person of Christ. Amen? Why was the Holy Spirit given? The Holy Spirit is given to teach us things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, to exalt the Lord Jesus Christ,

to win people to Jesus Christ. Amen? Praise God, each and every one of us in this room has certain gifts of the Spirit if you recognize them yet or not.

It's the truth. Isn't that right? And we need to understand who God has made us and how God wants us to function in the body of Christ, because I tell you what, if you don't understand what your place is and where you fit, you are not going to feel fulfilled. But even as we try to be surrendered more to the Spirit of God, and try to walk out by God's grace through faith in Jesus, you know, let the Spirit take control and use the gifts that God has given us, we've got to be careful to keep the focus on what the Holy Spirit wants to focus on, and that is Jesus Christ.

Amen? Let me just read for you a Scripture real quickly. John 16, 13 and 14, However, when the Spirit of truth has come, He will guide you into all truth. You want to know more about the Bible? You want to be a better Bible student? You can't do it without the Spirit of Christ.

Amen? Isn't it a funny thing that sometimes people that focus so much on being careful students of the Bible get kind of freaked out when people start talking about the Holy Spirit? You can't even understand the Bible without the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen? Again, here are a couple of things we've got to keep together. We cannot let them be pitted against one another.

Amen? You know, I know a lot of people that love to study the Bible and are careful Bible students, and they are uncomfortable in worship meetings. You know what that book, the Bible, is meant to make you? A worshiper. Amen? This book is all about worshiping Jesus.

And if your study of the Word of God isn't making you a more accurate, zealous, ardent, passionate worshiper of Jesus, you're not reading the book right. Amen? And if you're reading this book doesn't make you want to surrender more to the Spirit, something is messed up. Again, we're talking about holding all the right parts together so we stay balanced.

Amen? Let me get back to my verse so I don't start preaching another message. However, when the Spirit of Truth has come, He will guide you into all truth, for He will not speak of His own authority. Or the old King James says, He will not speak of Himself, but whatever He hears, He will speak, and He will tell you of things to come.

He will glorify Me, and He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. Jesus is speaking here. The Holy Spirit is given to exalt the Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen? And so, if we are filled and controlled and being led by the Holy Spirit, our vocabulary will be Jesus, Jesus, Jesus. Amen? We'll focus on the Lord Jesus Christ. But also, in our pursuit of being surrendered more to the control of the power of the Holy Spirit, we must also be careful of giving ourselves over to what I like to define as spiritual elitism.

Sometimes in our communication to people about where we want to go and what we want in our own life, you know, I want to be a man that is totally controlled by the power of God. I want God to use me in this and such a way. You know, I'm just tired of religion and just playing church.

I want to get on my knees and start talking along these lines. And if we're not careful, we can exclude people or maybe make people feel that they are less than we are. We can, in a very subtle way, find ourselves communicating zealously, not intentionally, but we can find ourselves exalting ourselves.

You know what I'm talking about? We've got to be careful of spiritual elitism being the tendency to view and hold ourselves in higher esteem than another part of the body of Christ. Because maybe they don't appreciate the same things that we do or aren't doing it exactly the way we're doing it. You know, maybe God has spoken to us this week and now we're going to pray 30 minutes a day, and those people over there are only praying 15 minutes a day.

Man, they need to get serious about Jesus. You know what I mean? Even though two weeks ago, you were just praying 10 minutes. You know what I'm saying? We get so cocky so quick and we communicate in little ways that puts people in a lower place.

You guys, this does not make the Gospel of Christ attractive and it doesn't draw people into a deeper relationship with Jesus. Amen? Quit talking about how much you're praying anyway. You know what I'm saying? Anybody that talks about how much they pray all the time, they're not praying enough, because if they were, they wouldn't be telling you how much they're praying.

Amen? Prayer is supposed to be something between you and Jesus in the closet, and that's one of the beauties of it. Nobody else can watch. You can't do it for the approval of men.

Amen? So quit talking about how much you're fasting and how much you're praying. That's trouble. That's all it is.

Okay, spiritual elitism. Holding ourselves higher in esteem than others in the body of Christ, who may not be in agreement with us. Amen? Okay, now as we talk about this, okay, we want to glorify Jesus.

We recognize it's not all about us anymore. It's all about Him. We want the character of Christ.

We want the Spirit of Christ, but we've got to be careful of spiritual pride and legalism. Extremism. Emphasizing the parts of the Spirit rather than the purpose of the Spirit.

We've got to be careful about elitism, but also let me make a mention of something, make a distinction between seeking to be non-denominational and inter-denominational. Okay? Sometimes, you know, when God starts doing something fresh in your heart, you go, oh man, you know, they didn't teach me right in the church I was raised in. You know, all these denominations, they're just doing their own thing.

I'm just a Bible Christian. You know, I'm just loving Jesus. I'm just a believer.

You know, right? I mean, three-fourths of all of our theology has been inherited from somebody else. Isn't that right? We didn't think up anything new by ourselves. But what I'm saying is sometimes when we just say, hey, I'm just a member of the body of Christ, I'm just non-denominational.

What some people, I'm not necessarily saying that you mean this, but some people by saying that say denominations are of no merit or value, that they don't have any contribution to the body of Christ, which is obviously going to be offensive, which is obviously going to build up walls between you and other parts of the body of Christ that God may perhaps want you to work with. Amen? I prefer the term inter-denominational, which means I hang out with a lot of believers that are from all kinds of different church backgrounds, and we may not necessarily emphasize any particular church background right now, or denomination, but we do recognize the merit and value and contribution that each denomination can give to the body of Christ. Amen? You see the difference, you guys? Because let's get real.

Every denomination that is on the spiritual horizon right now has a testimony, and God has used everybody in it. I'm talking about orthodox Christianity now, okay? I'm not talking about strange groups that are off there in the bushes. But I don't care if you're talking about Lutherans or Methodists or Presbyterians, Baptists, the assemblies of God, various groups, Episcopalians, each and every one of these denominations and institutions is on the map today because God moved there among some people at one time in the past.

Amen? And you guys, if we understand this and communicate this way, we'll find it much easier to work with all of God's people. Because I'm telling you, where God is taking us and what God wants to do on this campus and all around the world, no one denomination has a corner on the market. No one denomination can accomplish what God wants to do on the earth.

It's going to take the whole body of Christ. Amen? We are committed as much as is by the power of God and by His grace to be true to an interdenominational spirit, endeavoring to preserve the bond of love and peace and all our efforts to work with the whole body of Christ and expanding the Kingdom of God around the world. Amen? You guys, don't get into... There's so much stuff.

You need to... One thing that's really helpful is when you really study church history and you study some of the past moves of God, you study some of the varying ways that God has expanded the Kingdom of God throughout the centuries, you realize He used all kinds of people. Amen? I could give you accounts of mighty manifestations of God's Spirit, mighty revivals that were started when a group of believers came together and read out of a prayer book. Okay? That's not probably the way you or I would prefer to do it.

But that's how God did it in the past. You know what I mean? God has used guys from every type of stripe and brand of Christianity that you can imagine in days past. So often we like to say that God's movement in our midst is an endorsement of our own personal theology.

Amen? And a lot of times when you start studying what God is doing throughout the centuries, you realize He used all kinds of different people and maybe my little pet theology that I'm emphasizing so much isn't as important to God as it is to me. Amen? Certainly there are some orthodox tenets of the faith that do not change, that every believer held on to that really God was working with. But a lot of the variables, a lot of the peripherals, they change.

Amen? Okay, let's talk about the final leg of the stool, if you will, that creates an opportunity to exalt Christ and worship Him. We've talked about the character of Christ, the power of Christ, and finally, the ambition of Christ. The ambition of Christ or the agenda of Christ.

Namely, to get the Gospel to every tongue, tribe, and nation. Amen? Namely, to evangelize the lost, to reach those who do not know the Lord Jesus Christ. I have noticed in my own experience that some of the people that emphasize personal holiness and Christian character the most, their eyes are so introspective, they are so concerned about what's going on in their own life that they forget the lost out there that don't even know about Jesus Christ yet.

Have you ever met any of those people? They're so focused on the little standards that people are doing this or that that they're not even noticing the hundreds, the thousands, the scores of people that are going to hell without any effective witness in their life. And it's also interesting to notice that some of the people that emphasize the power of the Holy Spirit, the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and the move of the Holy Spirit are also at times not very evangelical. They're so busy showing off what gift they have or what they're doing

sometimes or what God can do through them, they're kind of just showing each other and forgetting about the lost.

You see what I'm talking about you guys? We need the character of Christ. We need the power of the Spirit. But why do we have the power of the Spirit? It's for sharing the Gospel.

Amen? And what does the character of Christ do in our life but establish the fact that we are different than the lost? The fact that God is real and He has come down and done something in our life that is available for them to have it done in their life. Amen? I mean, if there is any godly character in us, it's to reveal that there is a Redeemer. There is a Savior.

There is salvation. Amen? That what Jesus died on the cross to provide for us is not just to go to heaven one day, but to set us free from our sins. That is an established testimony.

People need to see that yes, we are different. Are we perfect? I'm not suggesting that. But we're growing.

We're changing. We're developing. Our life is unfolding in new and exciting ways.

And that testimony births hope in people's lives that they can be different. Why do we have a godly character? To make people notice, hey, there's a God out there. Why do we have the Spirit? To minister that hope to other people.

Amen? I shared this testimony last night with some folks. Recently in the town that I'm from, there's a church that I drive by almost, I'd say at least three times a week, that the youth minister has kind of fallen into a moral dilemma. That's a great understatement.

It's had a real character crisis there. Fell into some serious sin with some of the people in the congregation there. And it was well publicized on the news and the name of the church was broadcast morning and night on the local news there.

And the next time I drove by the church, I was really surprised to notice that the church sign had been torn down, had been taken down. And I thought, what a stark reminder of the fact that if we compromise our godly character, we lose our testimony. Amen? It says in Proverbs that a man's gifts make room for him.

You may want the Spirit of God in your life. God graces you in such a way that you can have an impact and have influence with other people. A lot of doors can be opened through the gifts that God has given us.

Amen? But you know what? If you compromise your character, you will lose that ground. Amen? That door will close. And then you will not have that witness that God wants you to have.

You see how we have to have all these three things together? We've got to understand what the ambition of Christ is. Luke 24, 46 and 49. Then He said to them, Thus it is written and thus it is necessary for Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day.

And that repentance and the remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations beginning at Jerusalem. And you are witnesses of these things. Behold, I send the promise of My Father upon you, that tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.

And of course, Acts 1.8, that you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem and Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth. Christ's ambition is to reach every tongue, tribe and nation with the good news. Amen? Christ's ambition is to make the nations of this world the nations of God.

Christ's ambition is to reach the lost, you guys. We've got to have that as a driving force in our life, a passion in our life. We've got to be people who are compassionate towards the lost, tender-hearted towards the lost, who care for the lost and who look for opportunities to reach the lost.

We need godly character in our life and we need the Spirit of God in our life to accomplish the great ambition. And I want you to notice, this thing is making a full circle. As we help by the power of the Spirit and by God's grace fulfill Christ's ambition, He gets the glory.

Amen? He's honored because remember where we started? It's all about Him. It's all about His sake, His glory and His worship. Amen? This is what God wants us to be about.

So in your pursuit of seeking these new things that God wants to do in your life, you know, you go through a season where God's turning the inside out, He's freeing you up of some old sin that used to be in bondage about. You're just so excited, you know what I mean? Then suddenly He shows you, hey, I want to use you and I've given you this gift and you get excited about that deal. Just remember what this fresh thing in your life is all about and what it's for.

It's for His sake and His glory. Amen? Just keep it in perspective. You lose one of these legs and the stool falls over and God's reputation and yours is laying on the ground.

Amen? We've got to keep it together. We've got to keep balance. Does this make sense to you guys? You know, this is one of the things that is just, I believe, tries to elude the church at large and as individuals just the same.

It's hanging on to the stuff that God has put in our life. God starts doing something new. Remember where He's brought you from.

Remember what He was doing last season. Don't let go of it. Amen? Maybe you recognize, well, I've got a couple of those legs in my life, but I'm kind of short on one or two.

You know what I mean? Or maybe it's just your motivation. You really haven't come to the place where you really surrendered to this thing. Say, hey God, I want to live for Your glory.

I want to live for Your honor. I recognize that this house is for You and not just for me. It's not just to make me happy.

Amen? Hopefully these are helpful. But while we stand, I'll just pray for us. Whatever God has spoken to you through this, I don't want to belabor it anymore, but keep these things before you.

We want to be people of holiness, but we want to be balanced. Amen? If you're given to spiritual pride, if you're given to little codes and judging other people, if you've found yourself caught up in some kind of spiritual elitism, turn from that. Amen? Don't let that tarnish the reputation of Christ.

So often people have had a bad experience with Christians because Christians do these type of things sometimes, and then people have an excuse to push away from them the very thing that they need.

Amen? We want to get rid of the excuses by doing this right. Well, Lord, we just surrender to You, Jesus.

And we just say, God, in and of ourselves, we don't know how to do this. We don't have the strength to do this. But God, we want to be a people that are balanced.

We want to be a people who, God, are about Your glory, about Your honor, who recognize our created purpose to bring You pleasure and not to please ourselves. God, we recognize that You have called us to be a people who are holy in our character, a people that are pure, the people that are being transformed right before a lost and dying world's eyes, God. You're doing it day by day in us, God, one step at a time.

And God, we just thank You for that. And God, keep us balanced. Keep us from gravitating towards things that would make the message and call of godly character more difficult than it's supposed to be.

And God, I pray that You would just stir and stimulate within us the spirit of adoption, the power of the Holy Spirit. God, just deposit within us and stir up within us the gifts and callings in this place that we might minister effectively to be a part of Your great ambition of reaching the lost, Lord Jesus. God, for Your honor and for Your glory.

And God, we know these are just some, just a sampling of things that we need in our life. But God, help us to be pursuing these things in balance, Lord, in Jesus' name. Amen.

Thank you guys for the opportunity to share.

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