

Expect Conference 2010

by Gary Wilkerson

Gary Wilkerson's sermon at the Expect Conference emphasizes the importance of maintaining high expectations and faith in God's plans despite challenges in ministry.

Duration: 59:40

Scripture: Romans 1:16, Philippians 1:20, 2 Thessalonians 3:11-15

Topics: "Conference"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of having a strong work ethic and not being idle. He references 2 Thessalonians chapter 3, verses 11-15, which speaks against idleness and encourages believers to work quietly and earn their living. The preacher also addresses the tendency to compare oneself to others and feel ashamed or unqualified for ministry. He reminds listeners that the hope lies in the gospel of Jesus Christ, which is the only way of ministering and preaching. The sermon concludes with a reminder that preaching the gospel and operating in its power is the ultimate calling for believers.

Transcript

And I know there's always a need in us as pastors and leaders and those in Christian ministry to be encouraged in the Lord and be challenged in our faith and to believe God has better things yet to come, the best is yet to come as many people say. We're believing God to do great things. The conference is called Expect and we're hoping that before you leave over these next few days that you will have higher expectations, greater faith, overcoming discouragements, doubts, fears, tribulations, trials, temptations, suffering, deacons.

And I want to, I want to thank the Lord for gathering those who have come to speak to us over the next few days. There's a very strong New York connection and you'll be seeing that over the next few days. We're glad to have a host of folks from from those places as well in New York City.

That's quite a city. You've been in New York City before? It's just like Colorado Springs. I think they're the same old, same kind of layout, the land.

It's just they have rivers, we have mountains. Let's pray and ask God to speak deeply to our hearts here in this first session. Holy Spirit, come into this room.

We claim it now for Christ and your purposes. We believe that in this hall that has symphonies and plays right now, Lord, it's transformed into a place for us to meet with God. And we call on you, Holy Spirit, to come and meet those who come to this conference dry and thirsty, weary, looking for a word from heaven.

We call on you, Jesus, to come and manifest your presence in this place that our lives would be transformed. We thank you that the Word of God is sharp and living. It is a two-edged sword and we ask you, Lord, to drive that sword into our heart, to cut out things that don't belong, and to release the healing, the fleshly tender heart of the things that you have are calling us into the future.

God, if we're going to call this conference, expect and you're going to allow me right now to expect great things to happen here. You're going to allow me to pray for people to have great things take place in their lives. We claim it, we believe it, and we agree together by saying amen in Jesus' name, amen.

In 1786, a young pastor in his early 20s went to a conference in England, a conference called the Northampton Baptist Convention. It had music very similar to ours. A young man, only been in the ministry for about a year, stood up.

A lot of elders around him, people had been in the ministry. His own mentor and pastor and elder was there, the denomination head was there convening that conference. And this young man named William Carey in 1786 stood up and he challenged this group of pastors saying, will we truly believe the call of Jesus Christ that he has called us to do great things? Do we truly believe that God has called us to reach nations, to reach those who are without Christ? Do we truly believe that there is an hour and a destiny for our generation? It wasn't well received.

As a matter of fact, John Ryland Sr., the convener of that convention, interrupted young William Carey. And here's the words that are quoted throughout history. It says that that Reverend Ryland said to him, sit down young man, you are an enthusiast.

How many of you would like to be in that category, William Carey being an enthusiast? Sit down young man, you are an enthusiast. If God wants to save the heathen, he will do so without your help or mine. I think Dr. Ryland would not be one to give much help to the heathen with that kind of attitude, that kind of philosophy.

Carey was hurt because this man was his mentor and he went away from that first day of the conference discouraged and not sure if this call on his life to do great things for God, to believe that God was mighty, to believe that nothing was impossible. This call is being challenged in his life now by those who are in authority in his life. Sit down young man, you're too enthusiastic.

Your vision is too great. You're believing for too much. Just settle down to a parish.

Make a good living. Have a comfortable garden in your backyard. Do it English style.

Excuse me if you're any British here tonight. But he was not satisfied. How many of you know that feeling of not being satisfied? You may hear something.

You may hear a voice. It could be from a pastor. It could be from a leader.

It could be from a denomination leader. It could be on the radio. It could be on the television and this voice seems to discourage you.

It could be a voice from your own flesh. It could be the voice of the enemy trying to cause you to be downcast, to be discouraged, to give up, to say there's no hope for you. And then Cary was wrestling with this voice that he was hearing in his mind.

There's no use. There's no hope. Why go on? And he went back a few days later to the same convention and this time it was his turn to interrupt.

And he stood up and he asked these questions quoted in history. He says, is it not the commission, is not the commission of our Lord Jesus Christ still bearing on us today? Are we not called to do more than we as a people are now doing? And then he spoke these words that are quite famous. Most of you in this place know this.

He said, are we not to expect great things from God and to do great things for God? And that's a quote that has lived in history. Many people quote it over. And that's what we call this conference.

The one word there is expect. It's pulled from the heart and the pages of men like William Cary and Hudson Taylor and those who have gone ahead and believed that God could do great things and have gone through severe trial and hardship and long enduring suffering and yet come out in victory. And we believe that there are people, as we've been praying over this conference, we truly believe there are people in this room that God sent here who began their ministry with this high level of expectation.

How many of you in here can say amen to that? You really believe that God called you to do great things with your life. You truly believe that there is a divine purpose for you. You don't believe you were called to mediocrity.

You don't believe you were called to things that are insignificant. You weren't called to waste time, to idly go by in a ministry that is just doing status quo. You know when you were called in the ministry that call put a stirring in your heart and a fire in your soul and a spiritual ambition that can only come from God.

And then you got into ministry and the altars weren't filled immediately and the church didn't grow rapidly and the missions dollars didn't come in for the events that you had hoped and the sending that you had wanted to do. And the reality that you've experienced is your expectations are sky-high. You truly believe that there's something yet to come, the call of God in your life.

There's a reality yet to be experienced and your expectation, like mine has been for many years of my ministry, very, very high. Believing God for great things and expecting God to do mighty things and attempting great things for God is up high. But then is it not true that sometimes our reality is down here? Or should I come off the stage and walk down here and put my hand on the floor there and say sometimes our expectations are down here? And the disparity, the disparity between how high our hopes are and how low our reality is, and how struggling our reality and how difficult our reality is, is causing us to wonder if we're doing something wrong.

It's creating in us a bewilderment, if you will. Am I missing something, God? When I was a kid we used to sing in my little Assemblies of God church that I went to. Remember the song? Pass me not, O gentle Savior, hear my humble cry.

While on others Thou art falling, do not pass me by. Most people sang that as a cry of hope and I sang it in fear. While on others Thou art falling, you know, it's like I'm going to be the only one in this room you're not going to fall on.

And that carried on, to be honest with you, can I be direct with you, that carried on to a large portion of my ministry. You're falling on others. You're falling on others.

You're falling on others. You're doing great things for others, but what's wrong with me? My expectation was great high, I believe with William Carey, that it is a good thing not to seek great things for yourself. But when Jesus was asked the question, will you make us the greatest in your kingdom? Will you let us sit at your right hand and your left hand? He didn't tell him, don't seek great things.

He said, if you seek to be great then become a servant. The idea was not that He doesn't want great things to happen in our life, in our ministry, in our family, in our church, in our mission. It's that He doesn't want those to be sought for ourselves.

Jeremiah says, do you seek great things for yourself? Seek them not. And oftentimes that discourages us from thinking that we can ask God and believe God for mighty things in our life and in our ministry. But when you signed up for this stuff that you're in, didn't you sign up for great things? Didn't you sign up believing that God truly could move through you? And so I want to take one passage of Scripture in the three hours I have with you here.

And I am going to be a living concordance tonight. What I mean by that is we're going to go through Scriptures so fast and rapidly that either your fingers will be burning or the pages of your Bible will catch on fire, spontaneous combustion. You think your head might be dizzy from the high altitude here in Colorado Springs, but it might be from the dizziness of the fast pace that we're going to look at Scriptures.

I'm thankful that my homiletics teacher is not here because this is not a well-crafted sermon. It has far too many passages of Scripture. Is there such a thing? And I don't say that tritely or lightly.

I say that to say I believe in this first session what my duty is and what my calling is, is to set forth the Word of the Lord, not to just give you some of my thoughts or my opinions or my stories. Those stories and thoughts and things are incredible and we will be hearing them throughout this conference as God speaks to the men and women of God who share here. But I want to take you in this first session through the Word of God.

I tell my youth pastor who's here tonight, because he is a young man, he wonders sometimes, did I do well when I preached this week? I feel like I struggled and I asked him, did you bring the Word of God to your people, to your young people? And if he says yes, I know he did a good job. Isn't that right? If he preaches the Word of God. Okay, you just said yes, so that means I can take the time with you in the Word.

First, turn with me to Philippians chapter 1 verse 20. And that'll be the main text that we'll springboard from tonight to go through these many verses. I hope you brought your Bible.

I'll be probably turning so fast that you may not be able to move to all of them. So on the screen behind me there should be some of these verses going up there if they got the technology down correctly. Philippians chapter 1 verse 20.

I'm reading from the ESV. If you're reading from something else, it's probably totally different and not right. I'm joking.

I'm joking. I'm kidding. Give me a break.

Verse 20. And it is my eager... I love these next two words Paul is saying here. It is my eager.

Now the translation says earnest. It is my passionate stirring of my heart. It is eager.

There's something eager in me that's calling out. And what it is, it is an expectation. In the midst of discouragement, in the midst of the dark night of the soul, in the midst of a troubled heart, when you bow your head and your heart and your knees before the Lord maybe in that midnight hour or two or three in the morning, aren't you glad the Holy Spirit comes and fills you once again with that eager expectation? When you come to a conference and your heart is broken over the trouble that you're seeing in the present reality that you experience, aren't you glad that the Holy Spirit still speaks today? Aren't you glad that the Spirit of God can break through anything that has come into your life? Aren't you glad He can replace discouragement with something that is eager? Aren't you glad that He can replace disillusionment with an expectation? Aren't you glad that He can replace despair with a new hope for glory? And that is exactly what Paul is saying.

And I have, Paul said, I have an eager expectation. And then he begins to explain in three things what this eager expectation is. And I hope, he says, I have an eager expectation and hope that I will not at all be ashamed, but that with full courage, now as always, always full courage, Christ will be honored in my body, whether it is by life or death, for me to live is Christ and to die is gain.

If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me, yet which I choose I cannot tell. Here's my outline. Number one, I will not be ashamed.

Number two, I will live and die with full courage. Number three, I will rightly expect and fully experience fruitful labor in my life. This is my eager expectation.

If you have not that type of faith here tonight, that faith has been stolen, I would like to share some of mine with you tonight. Not that I have a whole lot, but what I have, I'm willing to share. And I have this to say confidently and boldly.

It is my eager expectation. Number one, I will not be ashamed. Number two, I will live and die in and with full courage.

Number three, I will rightly expect and fully experience the fruitful labor that God has called me into. Number one, I will not be ashamed. That's hard to say sometimes.

Have you ever had that experience, pastor, where you have an encouraging wife? I have one of the most encouraging wives in the world. And when you are finished preaching and you're driving home with your wife, she tells you how amazing a preacher you are. That you are the best preacher in the world.

She is thankful that I grew up in the ministry of a great preacher named David Wilkerson, and she's thankful that I have so outdone him now. She has a problem with exaggeration. But you know that experience when you get in the car and you're driving home and she's quiet? And you know something's wrong? And you kind of like, so how did you like church today, honey? It was very good.

Oh, I love the worship. Good, that was good. I like the worship too.

And anything else about the service today that was good? Just the Lord was there. The Lord was present. The Lord is faithful.

Oh, that one hurts. The Lord is faithful. I know he's faithful.

How was the sermon? And then she looks for words. And have you ever left the pulpit just feeling like you really blew it? You just messed up? Have you ever done that like ten weeks in a row? Have you ever done that ten years in a row? In this age of internet and Wi-Fi and I don't even know all the names of this stuff. There's a whole bunch of stuff.

My phone is ringing right now even as I speak in my pocket. In this age of all this, it is so easy to go online and listen to a sermon and feel miserable because the sermon was so good. And you know what you just did two days before on a Sunday morning.

And it's so easy to feel ashamed. It's so easy to feel unqualified for the ministry. It's so easy to feel like, God, why did you choose me? And it's so easy to begin to think at times, pass me not, oh gentle Savior.

Fall on me as well. And I believe there, this is gonna sound strange here, but I want to take a few minutes with you and a few scriptures because I do believe before I tell you I will not be ashamed and you will not be ashamed. You will leave this conference fully assured that you do not need to be ashamed in the ministry God has called you to.

Before we go there, I want to say, be careful that you don't do shameful things. Be careful that we don't throw out the word conviction as we throw out the word condemnation. And there are many people that refuse to, and rightly so as Scripture says, I will not be, I'm not under condemnation.

But they've taken it so far to say, now I don't even receive conviction. I don't want to hear a hard word. I don't want to hear God pierce my heart with His word.

But there are times where being ashamed is a gift from God, if I could say it that way. Number one, when we, there is a time to be ashamed when the poor quality of our work ethic causes us to have diminished results that God never intended us to have. 2 Thessalonians chapter 3 and verses 11 through 15, I won't take the time to read it there, but it begins to paint a picture.

It paints a picture there, you see it on the screen. I'll go ahead and read it. For we hear that some among you walk in idleness, not busy at work, but busy bodies.

Now such persons we command and encourage in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly and earn their living. And the next verse says this, as for you brothers, do not grow weary in doing good. If anyone does not obey what we say in this letter, take note of that person and have nothing to do with him that he might be ashamed.

We live in a culture that is very therapeutic, don't we? We live in a pop psychology culture and that has seeped into our Christian church. And one of the sins that probably many people would say today that's probably close to the unpardonable sin, blasphemy in the Holy Spirit, would be to have some shame in your life. To be ashamed of yourself and to feel bad about yourself, to be downcast about yourself.

It seems to me that Paul is saying here there's a time if a man and a woman is called into the gospel work of Jesus Christ and he's called to lay down his life for those among him. And he or she does not give him or herself to the work of God fully. If they begin to get lazy and slothful, if they watch television all day and night and they just, they work on Sunday mornings for two hours and the rest of the week they might make a few phone calls, but they're not fully engaged in the work.

They've lost the zeal, they've lost the passion, they've lost that Holy Ghost fire in their soul. And Paul says that there's a time for rightly be ashamed. I want to invite you into some shame.

I don't know if that's a good thing or not, but it seems to be biblical here tonight from what I mean. I want to invite you to say if you need conviction of the Holy Spirit and you're here tonight you're saying I'm discouraged and I'm downcast and I'm ready to give up. Well, if you haven't worked in the last six months maybe you should consider it.

If you haven't got a stirring in your soul that says, God let me wake up early in the morning and let me go as long as I can physically go. Let me give myself day and night and afternoon and evening and in the early mornings let me burn the candle at both ends if I have to. Yes, taking that Sabbath, but Sabbath wasn't meant to be three days.

To give yourself wholly to the work of the Lord. Number two, we can rightly be ashamed at the lack of any sign of fruit or harvest. Jeremiah chapter 14 verse 4 speaks of the ground that is being dismayed.

There's no rain and it says here that the farmers are ashamed and rightly so. If you have been working at your ministry for year and year and year in and year out and the church is no more loving and people are not being saved and worship is not being expressed to God and the Holy Spirit is not present in your meeting, it's time to examine the ground of your ministry. It's time to ask God for a Holy Ghost conviction.

Say, God no more, no more God. I no longer want to live this way. I refuse to continue to live in a fruitful barren ministry.

Cry out like those in the Old Testament who were without children and they cried out so much so that Eli thought that one of them was drunk. There's a cry in her soul, God I want to be fruitful. I don't want to be barren any longer.

Joel chapter 1 verse 11 says, be astonished tillers, those who till the ground, those who are trying to do the work of the Lord, be astonished because the harvest has been, has passed you by or has perished. The harvest is gone. There was an opportunity in your parish.

There was an opportunity in your city. You were called by God. He put on you a burden and a joy and a delight and a vision and something happened in your life where you checked out or you backed down or you let the devil overrun you and you lost your fight.

You lost the spiritual gumption and now you look at the field that was right before you. The harvest that was white and it's passed by. It's grown old.

It's fallen off the branches and it lays now dormant on the ground lifeless because the man or woman of God was unwilling to go out there and plow the ground and pray the prayers and believe in faith and be unwilling to give up in discouragement. Number three, at our dependency on human power and worldly schemes to accomplish God's purposes. In Ezra, there's an interesting story in Ezra and it's found in verse 21 through 23 and we see in in the story of Ezra here.

You can read it behind me. Ezra had an opportunity as he was moving his people in to rebuild the city and the walls and he think he was thinking of his family and his children and those he he he cared for. The sheep that he was a shepherd over and he got frightened.

What happens if our enemies rise up against us? What happens if under my watch people are harmed? And he had an opportunity to get fear in his soul and he begins to ask the question, should I call on those who are foreigners? Those who are not of God? And he says here, if I call on God for I was ashamed to ask the king for a band of soldiers and horsemen to protect us against the enemy on our way since we had told the king the hand of our God is for good on all who seek him and the power of his wrath against all who forsake him. Ezra's asking this question, can I can I go back and count on the hand of man and the power of man when I have already proclaimed that God is powerful and yet so many times so many of us in our ministries are are trusting in the hand of man, are trusting in our own abilities, are trusting in resources, programs, new ways of doing church, even new ways of being a Christian, even new theologies, even new doctrines that are not in our scriptures. And it's very, very tempting.

15 years ago I was pastoring a church that was very difficult for me to pastor. It was it was a struggle to pastor. It was the type of church where your elders would call you in and the first thing they would say is, Pastor Gary, we just love you so much.

And you know when you ever hear that from your elders, you're in trouble. And so I'd get these calls and it was just a difficult. And so to try to make things happen, I constantly found some newfangled idea that was coming down the pike.

And I would say, now we're going to be a seeker sensitive church. We did that for six months and it didn't work. Now we're going to be a purpose driven church.

We did that for six months and it didn't work. Now we're going to be a, I don't know, whatever. You can choose them all the time.

They come real rapidly. They come fast and they come attached with great stories of success. And I wanted to give myself to them thinking that that would be my success.

I had people in my church come to me and say, Pastor Gary, we love this church. I said, why? He said, well you know a lot of us are church hoppers. We go around from church to church to church, but we don't have to move.

We can stay here and you just change. Our dependency on human programs, worldly strategies never accomplished God's purposes. We have to look to the hand of God.

We have to look to the fountainhead. We have to look to the source. It is in Christ and Christ alone is the hope for our church.

We can't look to what others have to offer. Yes, we can learn and glean and take bits and pieces, but God has a vision for you. God has a call for you.

He has His hand on you. Number four, moving quickly as possible, making an idol of success. Hosea chapter 10 verse 5 says that the people and even the priests who were idolatrists in their heart, they were rejoicing over the glory of their idol.

And many of us in America today, because America is very different than many other countries, I've been in 60 countries over the last six years, and many countries are extremely different. Most countries, pastors are not pop stars. They're not rock idols.

They're not Mr. Cool. They're not separated and can't be touched because they're so hip and groovy. In most countries, pastors are suffering.

In a lot of countries, pastors are laying down their life. A friend of mine just told me about an underground pastor in North Korea in prison now. It's easy for us to make an idol of ministry and say, I could be... and we start measuring how big the totem pole has become in our life.

How many downed churches have we had? How many downloads of our sermons? How many people in our attendance in our pews? And we have these measuring rods that don't mean a hill of beans to God. God is looking for faithfulness. God is looking for a man or woman whose heart is wholly given to Him that He might show Himself strong through that person.

And so many of us are torn or pulled, I should say, with this ungodly, fleshly, carnal desire to have a great ministry externally. It looks good. It looks big.

It looks growing. There are many young pastors who, if you could ask them what one thing they could have for their church, they probably wouldn't tell you this. They wouldn't say it out loud, but they probably wouldn't really be thinking, oh, a praying church, an on-fire church, a holy church, a godly church, a missions-driven church.

Probably what they're thinking might be is to be on that list that's in Outreach magazine. Some of you know what I'm talking about? A hundred fastest-growing churches in America. We've gone so downhill in America, now we list our idols.

We put them in order from one to a hundred. And we start trying to find one. I'm not putting those churches down.

They're great churches. I'm not putting them down. I'm putting that ungodly ambition in us that says we want what they have.

We want that kind of pop. We want that kind of hype. We want that kind of jam in our congregation.

And it drives us away from the things that God has called us to. Number five, that not rightly, if there's going to be any bit of being ashamed in my life, this is one that that I don't want to be accounted in my life. And it's, number five, would be being ashamed at not rightly handling the Word of God, of using pop psychology in the pulpit, of clever stories and telling jokes, and the levity, and the lack of conviction, and the lack of the Holy Spirit's power, and the lack of a Word that transforms lives, that after years and years of preaching, that people are untransformed, looking very much like the world.

And so when we have these surveys of Gallup polls, and they say the divorce rate is the same in the church as it is in the world. Adultery is the same in the church as it is in the world. Sleeping together without marriage is the same in the church as it is in the world.

I would say we pastors need to look at ourselves and say, are we rightly dividing the Word of God? Because the Word of God will either convict and change their lives, or they're going to get so fed up at you preaching, and yelling, and screaming, and praying, and pleading, and crying, that they're going to leave the church. So 2 Timothy chapter 2, 5, 2, 15, excuse me, says we are to rightly divide the Word of God. In this pop culture that we have, that's even seeped into the church today, there's this desire to grow, and do, and be known.

And it's causing us, if we're not careful, to be compromised, and to preach a message that is not God's message, but it's a message that gets to more crowds, gets more people to fill the pews, gets more people to add to the roles. And if we judge according to those things, Noah was a total failure. He barely got his own family in the ark.

If we go by that kind of measuring rod, then Jeremiah was an utter failure. And he might have been a failure to his peers, but he had the favor of God. And I would trade that any day to have God's favor in my life.

And so, oh, that I would rightly divide the Word of God. And as I rightly divide the Word of God, it is so becoming clearer, and more precious to me, and more vital to me, and more convicting to me that as I preach and open this Word of God, there are times when I preach it and I go, God, I'm telling these people things that I don't live. I am telling these people to be free of materialism.

I go to a home filled with junk. I tell them to give liberally and generously, and I cling to my own money as if it's necessary for the rainy day, as they call it. And more and more I'm seeing, oh God, the disparity between Your Word and my life is unacceptable to me.

And I want my life and this Word to be matched in sync. I want it to be one. And when I preach it, I don't want that haunting voice behind me.

I don't want Satan to say, you're preaching something you don't even live yourself. And I can honestly say, I rebuke you, Satan. Get behind me, and way behind me, and even out of the building, because God's given me the power to live what the Word says.

I want to align. I want to align my life with the Word of God. And so when I don't rightly handle the Word of God, it doesn't just mean not rightly preaching the Word of God.

More importantly, it means rightly living the Word of God. There are some pastors of some very small churches who nobody knows, and they're terrible preachers, but they live what they preach so well the people follow them, and their lives are changed. And you may not be clever, and you may not be articulate.

You may be like me, having sometimes the struggle to put a sermon together. But if you'll live this Word of God, you'll then be able to rightly divide it, because it'll be seen in your life, and people will taste and see and say, ah, the Lord is good. I want more of what they're having there.

There's good news. I've talked real briefly. Not real briefly.

I went a long time. I'm only on page two of my notes. I talked briefly about ways that... These are five ways that shame could come into our life, but there's good news, that this shame is not something that God wants to accuse us of, and wants to point the finger at and say to us, you know, I probably shouldn't have called you into the ministry in the first place.

I don't make many mistakes, but you were one of them. He's not doing that. He's saying to you, I bring this to your attention because I love you deeply.

I have plans for your life. I have a better way of living. I have a righteous, holy, godly, convicting, pure, gentle, loving call on your life.

And if you will allow me to rend your heart and to break up the fallow ground of your heart on the inside, I can bring you life abundantly, joy overflowing, power of the Holy Spirit will come. That's the good news, that His love unearths in us. His love unearths in us those things that don't belong so that He could bring us to the things that do belong.

We cling to the Word of God, and we cling to this desire in Paul's heart that says, I will not be ashamed. And tonight in this place, I would ask the Holy Spirit to just open up our hearts and say, God, if there's anything in my life that doesn't belong tonight, let me do business with God and remove those things of shame from my life that I could, on the other hand, say with Paul, with boldness and clarity and vision and purpose, with eagerness and an expectation that says, I expect not to be ashamed. That's my expectation.

I don't wake up in the morning expecting, today I'm going to be ashamed again. Today I'm going to fail again. Today I'm going to blow it again.

Today I'm going to get people mad at me again. Today, oh no, it's an eager expectation that I will not be ashamed. What is it that, on the opposite side of being ashamed, rightly so, what is it that we can say with Paul, I will not be ashamed? Is it because your church is growing? No.

I have been in churches that, for five or six years, had zero growth. Now I'm pastoring a church here in Colorado Springs that, in the last 18 months, has grown from 40 to over a thousand. And I know that the numbers are not what causes me to be ashamed or not ashamed, but I know what does.

Give me the resolve in my heart to agree with Paul and say, I will not be ashamed. And I hope you leave this building tonight saying, I will not be ashamed. I will not be ashamed.

I almost never do this. You'll hear Pastor Claude speaking in tomorrow, and he will make you do this 15 or 20 times. But can you say this with me? I will not be ashamed.

I will not be ashamed. Say it one more time. I will not be ashamed.

That is, hold on to that. Cling to that. Grasp onto that.

Say it over and over to yourself. God, you have called me to a life that I can say with Paul, the Apostle, I will not be ashamed. Number one, because Psalms 25 3 says, those that wait on God will not be ashamed.

The power of an unashamed life is born in nothing else but waiting upon God. It is probably the least pursued practice in our ministries today, and yet is one of the most important practices in the ministry today. Simply to do nothing but to wait upon the Holy Spirit, to be in His presence, to love on Him, and to receive His love, to walk with Him, to talk with Him, to commune with Him.

I love the old hymn, I come to the garden alone while the dew is still on the roses, and He walks with me, and He talks with me, and He tells me I am His own. And oh the joy. Oh, if you're discouraged and downcast, the answer is not in finding a newfangled way to make your church grow.

The answer is waiting on the Lord and your heart being renewed with strength. Number two, Psalms 34 verse 5 says, you will not be ashamed when you look to God. Number one, we say we wait on God, but number two, we look to God.

Where is the power? Where is the Lord God of Elijah? Where is the power that accompanies the expectation? It is in looking to God. I have wrongly taught for many years to seek God's face and not His hand. If you seek God's face, then His hand and power will come, but I have been convicted by the Holy Spirit because God wants us to seek His face, yes, to wait on Him, yes, but He also wants us to seek His hand.

It's not like God's hiding His hands behind His back and saying, oh, you keep asking me for power. You keep asking me to move mightily, and I just want you to look at my face. Don't I have a nice face? Yes, Jesus, you have a beautiful face.

I love your face, but He wants us to see the strong arm of the Lord revealed. He wants the power of God to move through our ministry. He wants our cities to be transformed because there's a holy man or woman of God standing in the pulpit and leading a church that is making a difference in their culture.

That was a great opportunity to say amen that you missed. Seeking His face and His hand. Number three, Isaiah 54.

I don't have time to turn there, but it basically is saying there, Isaiah is saying I will fear nothing. I don't need to be ashamed because God has taken fear out of my life. The fear of public speaking, they say, is one of the greatest fears that you could possibly have.

Try opening up a conference with these kind of guys sitting in the front row here. Public speaking can be a great fear, but if I'm trying to impress somebody else, then I have reason to be fear and I should be ashamed. But I can stand before you here tonight saying, I don't care what these guys think about me.

I like them and I hope they like me, but I don't care if they approve of my message or disapprove of it. I'm doing what I told my youth pastor. If I finish this message and I can say to myself, I preached the Word of God, then I've done exactly what is right in this hour.

Whether you're impressed with the sermon or not, I believe I can fear nothing. I don't have to tremble at any demon in hell. I can do what like John Wesley did when he was traveling and he was worn out and he was laying in a hotel bed and this evil spirit comes into his room.

It was actually a hooded creature with dark skull and a dark eyes and a staff like the death itself. And it comes to the foot of his bed on a wearying night early in the middle of the night and it stands there at the foot of his bed and John Wesley looks up. He wakes up and he looks at this spirit or whatever it is and he says, oh, it's only you.

And he goes back to sleep. I will fear no man. I will tremble at no power of darkness.

Nothing in hell can separate us from the love of God nor for the calling of God that He has on your life. There is no reason to fear. If God has called you, He's with you and He's going to continue to be with you.

And if you've gone through a dry season and if you've gone through a difficult time and it feels like you're being overwhelmed by the evil one and the enemy, stand fast, stand firm because God is with you and you will not be ashamed. Number five, and it correlates to the other thing I said about rightly dividing the Word of God, on the opposite end of that is Romans 1.16. It says so clearly and so powerfully, I am not ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ. I am not ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

What's the hope for your church, for your ministry, for your mission, for your family, for your preaching? What is the hope? It's the gospel of Jesus Christ. There is no other gospel, there is no better gospel, there is no other way of ministering, there is no better way of ministering, there is no other way of preaching, there is no better way of preaching than preaching, living, loving, operating in the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ. When it's all said and done, we say a lot of words but it all comes down to the gospel of Jesus Christ, His shed blood, the cross, the resurrection, Christ ascending to the right hand of the Father, sending His Holy Spirit that we might have life and power.

And we do have that, so we are called to preach the gospel. I'm going to go quickly, okay number two, how's that for time? I'm not going to be able to finish tonight, but I'm going to close in just a few minutes, but let's try to cover number two. I will live full of courage.

I will live full of courage. William Carey had an opportunity to be fearful. He had an opportunity to quit.

He was called by a man named Dr. Thomas to go to India because Dr. Thomas knew of Carey's heart and his ambition, his desire, and his love for India. And so Dr. Thomas says, come with me on my next trip. I'm a medical doctor and I'm going to be some of the people in India with their medical problems.

Come with me. And they were going to spend several years there. And they get in the boat and they take this long journey.

Things took a long time to get places in those days. And they go months and months on this journey and they get to one of the ports and the boat that's taking them from one place to the next is not there any longer and he has to go home. Isn't that discouraging? After years of praying and planning and believing and expecting God for great things, he has to show up back home, downcast and discouraged.

He forges on. He goes ahead into the ministry and this time now with his wife and children. Dr. Thomas goes with him but only stays a few months.

Leaves the ministry early on because of how difficult it was. Leaving William Carey with a wife who was troubled in soul and mind. Leaving William Carey with little children.

And within the first few years, one of his children, a five-year-old boy, dies of a sickness that he didn't even understand or knew what it was. His wife has what we would call today a nervous breakdown. In one of his devotional times, in his journal, he writes this amazing... I've never heard a pastor write this in his journal.

I hope you've never had to write this. Tonight, my wife attacked me with a knife. But I thank God that his presence is here with me in India.

He was willing to go through hardship to endure himself having malaria many times almost to the point of death. But he knew he was on solid ground. He knew he could continue in courage.

He knew he was willing to move in power because God was with him. And no matter how many times, and this is what I want to say to you about living life of full courage, that no matter how many times it seems you've been defeated, that God is with you. No matter how many times it feels like there's not victory.

No matter how many times William Carey preached to those lost heathens in India and not one of them got saved for the first seven years of his ministry, he pressed on with full ambition, full courage, full godly passion, saying, God, you will not leave me ashamed. You have called and you will perform your word and

what you have called in my life. Judges chapter 20 verse 22 tells a weird story, a bizarre story of Israel going up against one of its own tribes, Benjamin, because Benjamin had done a vile thing.

And Israel asked the Lord, should we go up against Benjamin? And the Lord says, go up with them. I'll give you victory. And they get defeated.

And the next day the leaders asked, God, that didn't go so well. Have you ever had those experiences in your life? God, we believe you. Here's our vision.

Here's where we're headed. Here's what we believe. And then all of a sudden, boom, it falls short.

It fails. And then you ask the Lord and the Lord says, go again. Second day, the children of Israel asked, should we go up against Benjamin? The Lord says, yes, go up against him.

And they're defeated the second day in a row. I would have given up. Not only would I have given up, but I would have shook an angry fist at God.

God, why have you misled me? But they ask a third time, should we go up? And God says, yes, go up to against them a third time and I will give you the victory. And the third time they go up and they rout the Benjaminites. They totally rout them.

God gives them a great and glorious and mighty victory. How does he do this? Why does he do this? Because they were relentless and unwilling to give up and to surrender in the midst of hardship. Could you imagine if William Carey would have gone home after seven years and his wife trying to kill him and his babies dying and him, his own body wracked with malaria.

And after seven years with no converts, he would have gone home. What if it was six years and 364 days? But on that seventh, on that last day, he has his first convert, the first year of his eighth year of ministry, the first convert. And he stays for another, I believe it's another 34 years in India and saw over many say over 1500 people that he led personally to Jesus Christ.

And he started over 100 churches in India. And he started a Bible school in India. And he translated the scripture in various different Indian dialects to 34 different people groups.

That is a life well lived. That is a life that we can agree with that God calls us to expect great things from God and to attempt great things for God. No matter how many times you defeated, I encourage you not to give up.

I encourage you to stand firm. I encourage you never to surrender to believe that God has called you into his plans and purposes. I could go on, but I'm going to stop here.

I'm going to ask the worship team to come back. And I so long in my heart and the prayers that we've been praying over this conference would be not that just, listen carefully if you would please, not that just I would leave here saying, I will not be ashamed. That's, that's powerful, isn't it? That you would be able to live your life and I will not be ashamed.

But I personally believe that's insufficient. I don't want to, I don't want to close my life out and say, I got by by the skin of my teeth. I wasn't ashamed.

I didn't blow it so bad to have my life so full of shame. I don't think that's sufficient. I think that's just the starting ground.

That's just called a holy life. It's something that all of us should experience. But I think God wants and desires more in our life than for us just to say, I will not be ashamed.

I believe he wants us to say clearly and powerfully and profoundly and truthfully without reservation that I will live and die with full courage. And even though I didn't get the time to say tonight, but we can say I will rightly expect and fully experience fruitful labor that in this body that of mine, if should the Lord tarry, that I truly believe I'm going to experience not only the face of God, but I'm going to experience the hand of God. I'm going to experience the hand of God.

I've spent a long time of my life crying out, oh God, I, when I was 19 years old, I got called not only into the ministry, I got called to ministry much younger, but when I was 19, I got called into the ministry. And that call of the ministry was a call to be a church planter, to start churches. And I started some churches in some very difficult and fallow ground.

My dear friend, Pastor Tim DeLena is here and he's carrying on a work in one of the most difficult fields in America today, in the inner city of Detroit. If you've ever been in Michigan, they have, I don't know if they still have them, a bumper sticker that says, last one out, turn out the lights. Because there's so many people fleeing and the violence is so awful and the corruption in the city and the houses that are boarded up, he could have easily quit.

My dear friend in the front row here, he could have easily quit so many times, but he plowed ahead in a difficult ground. He could have moved to Southern California and he could be pastoring probably number six on the hundred fast-growing churches in America. But he's plowing in a church in the inner city of Detroit because he knows he's not going to be ashamed.

But not only is he not going to be ashamed, but he's going to live and die with full courage. He's going to go out saying, God, I burned the light bright in a city that was dark. And he's going to be able to say, I rightly and expect and fully experience fruitful labor, the lives that have been changed there.

And I know what it's like to experience difficult ground. And I'm at a time and a season in my life now where I'm reaping what I didn't sow. I am seeing a great harvest.

And I want to tell you today that if God has promised you, he's faithful to his word. And like William Carey, I encourage you, don't surrender, don't give up. Don't allow that after that seven years to say, that's enough, I'm not called, I'm not ready, I'm not prepared.

Change the things that need to be changed when we say there are things that would cause us to be ashamed. But to believe God. Father, I pray now in the name of Jesus.

Father, I pray now in the name of Jesus. Holy and anointed one, filled with power and glory and majesty, you are in this room. You are here to do business with us, God.

You are here to transform our lives, God. And we welcome it with open arms, God. Come God, because we want to leave this conference saying, I have an eager expectation that I will not be ashamed.

I will be full of courage. I will see fruitful labor in the days ahead. And God, we're asking, we're not ashamed to ask for fruitful labor.

We're not ashamed to ask great things. We're not ashamed to say, God, we have toiled in things that have been difficult. We're asking, Lord, a harvest that goes beyond our wildest dreams and expectations.

Lord, even in difficult ground, even in ground that when we toil, it seems to bear so little fruit. Oh God, Lord, let there be beauty come out of ashes. And I pray for those who are downcast and discouraged that this night, and when they hear Nikki Cruz preach in just a few minutes, and he continues to call on the Holy Spirit to move in our hearts, God, that our lives would be renewed and refreshed, rejuvenated.

And we could leave this building tonight saying, I believe and expect great things from God. And I can in full courage and faith and confidence say that I will believe that I can do great things in God. And I thank you for this in Jesus' name.

Stand with me if you would, please. And if you feel like you're about ready to give up, you're in that seventh year and you've not seen the fruit, I want you to step out of your seat and come to the front. And we're going to pray for you and believe that God will renew you and refresh you and encourage you.

Would you even right now, you don't have to wait for the music, step out of your seat and say, Pastor Gary, I came here and I was discouraged, I was hurting, I was wounded. Come on up closer to the front if you would, please. Come now as you pray.

We're going to sing this song. Come, we're going to believe God is going to do a miracle of refreshing in this place. Do you need refreshing? Do you need that power? Do you need that courage? Do you need that eager expectation to be renewed in your life? Come now as we sing, we'll see God do that miracle in your life.

Rise upon Jesus, look full in His wonderful face, and the things of earth will grow strange to meet Him in the light of His glory and grace. Church, would you extend your hands to these who have come to the front and begin to pray together. There's power in the unity of prayer.

We believe God does great and mighty things when we pray and we ask Him. And Father, we're asking now in the name of Jesus for our dear brothers and sisters who are hurting on the inside and they have been hoping for and expecting for great things, and yet the reality, Lord, seems to be farther away from what we want than we would ever imagine. And we're asking now in the name of Jesus to come Holy Spirit, come.

Come Spirit fill these beloved with your power and your authority. Come Holy Spirit into this house and be the healer that you are. Be the deliverer that you are.

Be the mighty right hand of God that you are. And God, we cast out all fear now in the name of Jesus and replace it with love and patience and long-suffering and endurance. Lord, we thank you right now, God, that that spirit of fear is gone.

We thank you now that discouragement and that willingness to say maybe it's time to surrender, God, that it would just be washed away from us. But God, we're not going to stop at asking for the negative to be gone. We're going to press ahead and say, God, let the glory come.

Let the glory come on us, Jesus. Oh, God. Oh, God.

There's been many times, many times we've asked for overcoming of discouragement, God, but that's not, we're not asking just for that. That's just the starting place. We're not asking for just the starting place, God.

We're asking for the fullness of glory, a full revelation of your vision for us, God, of your ministry for us, of your power that can work in us and through us, God. And I'm asking you now to raise up men and women of God at this altar, God, who go back to their churches and their ministries and their pulpits and their para-church ministries with a new fire and a new zeal and a new passion. God, not just saying I'm going to escape discouragement, but say, God, I'm going to press ahead.

I'm going to believe you for great and mighty things, God. Hallelujah. Thank you, God.

Thank you, God. Thank you, God. Oh, thank you, God.

Those of you who come forward, you know, have you ever read the list of the 12 disciples? And I always know it's Peter starts off, you know, Peter starts every time. It's like six times they list the five or six times they list the names. Peter's always up there in the front.

Most of us aren't like Peter. We're like number seven, eight, nine, 10, 11, 12. I don't even know who's listed 12.

Anybody here? I don't know if it's the same guy every time, poor guy, if he is. But you know what? All 12 of them, from the most well-known to those that we can't even remember their name on the list, all 12 of them, saving Judas, then Matthias took his place. All 12 of them were filled with the power of the Holy Spirit.

All 12 of them, if you read their histories, they went out, like we're talking about William Carey tonight, they went out to places all over the world and preached the gospel. God gave them, without notoriety or fanfare, God gave them power. And Father, we close this first session by asking for power of the Holy Spirit to come from on high.

We close this session by asking you, God, to fill these thirsty, hungry hearts with power from on high, God, a new fresh touch, a new call of God, renewing of the vision, God, not only renewing God, but a willingness to say, I'm going to take it even further, God. Satan's tried to rob this first vision from me. Well, then Lord, we're going to ask for a double portion then instead, a double portion of believing you, God, in our church, in our parish, in our city, that things would be different because God, you're making us different.

You're filling us with your power. We say these things in Jesus' name. Can you say amen? Let's give the Lord a clap offering and thank him for what he's done.

Bless you, Jesus. Bless you, Jesus. You're welcome to go back to your seats.

Just stand with us for just a moment. We're going to close right now. We want to, again, thank you for being here with us tonight.

In just a few minutes at eight o'clock, we'll be back for a short season of worship. And then we have the delight of hearing brother Nicky Cruz preach to us tonight. We're going to hear a fiery word from heaven.

We love Nicky so much at our church here in Colorado Springs, the Springs Church. He is one of our overseers and he's also one of our members. So I'm not sure whether he's under my authority or I'm under his.

It's a little confusing, but I would just say I'm under his because he's a seasoned man of God and we're looking forward to hearing him speak in just a few minutes. So why don't we take a short break and come back at eight o'clock. Thank you.

God bless you. Be dismissed for just a few minutes. See you at eight o'clock.

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