

The Fear of God - Part 5

by Jerry Bridges

The sermon emphasizes the importance of living with a mission to glorify God in all aspects of life, including everyday situations.

Duration: 54:16

Scripture: Romans 1:11

Topics: "Fear Of God"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of having a mission statement in life. He suggests that the ultimate mission should be to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. The speaker also highlights the need for reliance on Jesus and the Holy Spirit to accomplish this mission, as our own willpower is insufficient. Additionally, he encourages believers to conduct themselves in a way that makes the teaching about God attractive, even in the ordinary and mundane aspects of life. The speaker concludes by reminding listeners that their acceptance with God is not based on their performance, but on the finished work of Jesus Christ.

Transcript

Would you turn your Bibles again to 1 Corinthians chapter 10. While you're turning there, I want to just read to you a couple of verses from Romans chapter 1 to express my own heart and my own appreciation for myself and for my wife Jane. The Apostle Paul in Romans chapter 1 verses 11 and 12 said, I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong.

That is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith. And this has been my prayer that as we have been here this week with you, that we might be mutually encouraged with each other's faith. And you have indeed encouraged us.

You have encouraged us by your music. It's a joy to listen to you sing. In fact, last night, I think it was last night or night before last, I just stopped singing and listened to you.

I thought I've been giving out and here's my opportunity to take in. And so you were ministering to me and you have been through your singing this week as you have been singing to the glory of God. And thank you so much for that.

And then these dear pastors who have ministered the word each morning this week. I want to just say to you that those of you who are in the churches from which these pastors have come are indeed blessed. And I hope you realize that I'm sure you do, but just the opportunity to sit under the ministry of their word.

And then so many of you have offered words of encouragement to us. You've had us in for meals or something like that. And so you have ministered to us.

We trust that we have ministered to you and to him be all the glory. With that in mind, 1 Corinthians chapter 10, once again, the key verse for the message this evening is verse 31, where the apostle Paul says, so whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. Then he goes on and he says, do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks, or the church of God, even as I try to please everybody in every way, for I'm not seeking my own good, but the good of many so that they may be saved.

We are to do everything for the glory of God and for the good of others. This, of course, parallels what Jesus says to us as the first and second commandments that we are to love God with all of our heart and soul and mind. And then we are to love our neighbor as ourselves.

It has been well said that these two commandments, these two principles, shall we say, to do all to the glory of God and to do all for the good of our neighbor, give us all of the guidance that we need in areas that are not specifically addressed in scripture. And that's the actual context that the apostle Paul is stating these two principles here as he dealt with the subject, whether or not it was okay to eat meat that had been sacrificed in the temples of the idols and then brought next door into the meat market and offered for sale. And his answer was, yes, that's permissible, but don't offend, don't cause your neighbor to stumble who would have a scrupulous conscience and would feel that if he or she did that, that they would be sinning.

And so the apostle Paul, then in the context of that very specific issue in which guidance was asked, or maybe it wasn't asked, but he was giving it because he thought that they needed it, we find here the two principles that should help us to decide on issues that are not specifically addressed in scripture. So oftentimes we form personal convictions and that's well and good. The thing that we want to be careful that we do not do is that we do not elevate our personal convictions to the level of scripture and begin to impose our own convictions on other people.

And so we have these two principles, whatever you do, do it all to the glory of God and not to seek your own good, but the good of many so that they may be saved. I've already mentioned earlier this week that the Shorter Catechism's first question, what is the chief end of man, is answered with that famous quotation, man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever. And I pointed out that the framers of that answer did not say ends, that is plural, as if there were two separate ends, but they said the end, singular, the one end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever.

There was a time in my early Christian life when I not only thought that these were two different ends, but I think that I even sort of unconsciously assigned different time frames to them. I thought well in this life I'm to struggle to glorify God. And then I think because of that word forever was tacked on, I thought and that enjoy him forever, that's out into eternity.

So in this life I strive to glorify God and then in eternity I get to enjoy him forever. But that is not the intent. We are to glorify God and to enjoy him in this life.

In fact our good friend John Piper down in or over and down in Minneapolis, Minnesota says that God is most glorified when we are most satisfied in him. And so he said if he were writing that particular answer to the question what is the chief end of man, he would have written it man's chief end is to glorify God by enjoying him forever. The point is that that John Piper is making and the point which is inferred in the way that the framers of the catechism put those two together in a singular aim is that it is impossible to glorify God unless you are in fact enjoying him.

Unless you have such a relationship with him that you want to glorify him. And at the same time of course it follows that we cannot enjoy God unless our aim is to glorify him in all that we do. In fact as the apostle Paul says whether we eat or drink or whatever we do, significant things in life, the mundane insignificant things, what is more routine than eating and drinking.

And he says that even in these most mundane, these most routine affairs of life, make it your aim to glorify God. We've been considering the last two nights and this is the conclusion of three part series on the characteristics of people who fear God. And we began on Tuesday night by saying that one of the fundamental characteristics of the person who fears God is that he or she lives under the authority of God, consequently under the authority of his word, which means that we seek to obey it and to put it into practice.

And then that we live under the authority of the institutions, the authority institutions which God has ordained for the good of society and the good of his church. And then last night we saw that two more characteristics of a person who fears God is that he or she lives in conscious awareness of God's presence and in conscious awareness of our dependence upon him every moment of life, for life and breath and everything else in life. The great early 20th century theologian John Murray in his chapter on the fear of God in one of his books said the fear of God consists of awe, reverence, honor, and worship, and all of these exercised on the highest plane.

And we can see that if the fear of God does consist of awe and reverence and honor and worship, then it follows that glorifying God and enjoying him has to be, you might say, the ultimate in the series of characteristics of people who fear God. That is, the thing for which we are striving, you might say, the goal for which we seek is that in everything that we do that we might enjoy God and glorify him at the same time. What is the glory of God? Well, it depends on whose book you read, because I have never yet come across two definitions of the glory of God that were exactly the same.

But all of them have some commonality, and so it's not difficult for us to get at least a general idea of what the Bible means when it talks about the glory of God. And I would just offer this definition tonight, or description, that the glory of God is the sum of all of his infinite excellence and praiseworthiness. The glory of God is the sum of all of his infinite excellence and praiseworthiness.

Now, all of you pastors, I'm sure, have a different definition. I hope, though, that we all have a commonality in that. We are seeking the praiseworthiness.

We're seeking to view the infinite excellence of God. And his excellence and his praiseworthiness is set forth in display in his creation, in redemption, in his word, and in his people. And to glorify God, first of all, then, is to respond properly to this display of God's excellence and praiseworthiness by ascribing to him the honor and the adoration that is due to him because of his excellence.

If you'll turn with me in your Bibles, keep your finger in 1 Corinthians, but turn with me in your Bibles to Psalm 29, verses 1 and 2. David writes, Ascribe to the Lord, O mighty ones. Ascribe to the Lord glory and strength. Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name.

Worship the Lord in the splendor of his holiness. This is the first way that we glorify God, by responding to his glory as it is set forth for us in all that he's done. We ascribe back to the Lord.

We render the honor and the praise back to him, and we call this activity worship. When we speak of worshipping God, this is what we're seeking to do. We're seeking to ascribe to the Lord the glory and the strength that is due to him to worship him in the splendor of his holiness.

The second way that we glorify God, and the way that is suggested to us in 1 Corinthians 10, verse 31, is by reflecting his glory to those around us in the way that we live in our daily lives. Jesus addresses this in Matthew 5, verse 16, when he said, Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven. So we glorify God by worshiping him, and we glorify God by reflecting his glory to those around us by the way we live our daily lives.

As people see our good works, they would give glory to God. And that is the part that I want us to focus on tonight. And so I would ask you this question, what is your aim in life? What is your mission in life? You know, in the military, we always had a mission statement.

And then somewhere along the line, business and industry and so forth have gotten into the habit of adopting mission statements. And it's not too bad an exercise for each individually some time to sit down and take some time to contemplate and to pray and to see God's face and perhaps to write out our own personal mission statement. And I can think of no higher mission statement than to glorify God and to enjoy him forever.

Now, that's very simple. And you might want to flesh that out in certain things. And this is some of what we're going to be talking about tonight.

But I want to ask you, what is your mission or what is your aim in life? Is it to be successful? To pay the bills? To arrive at the day sometime when the mortgage is completely paid off? And there's nothing wrong with being successful and paying the bills and paying off the mortgage. But this is not our mission. This should not be our mission.

Perhaps your aim or your mission is to be popular. For those of you young people still in school and this tremendous peer pressure that you experience. Thank you very much.

And there's certainly nothing wrong with wanting to be accepted and approved by your peers. But this is not to be your mission in life. And let me say to those of us who are parents, sometimes we have our own personal agenda or our own personal mission for our children.

You know, if you've been an outstanding athlete as you were coming up through school, then your aim for your child is that he or she will follow in your footsteps and become an outstanding athlete or an outstanding musician or outstanding academically. Now, all of these things are good. It is good to aim for academic excellence and even athletic achievement if God has blessed you with the physical talents.

It doesn't mean that we should not strive to be good students or athletes or well thought of, but it means that we should do all of these things in the context that God would be glorified. This should be true of us

who are adults. All of life's activities, our vocations, our professions, our shopping, our selling, our driving, everything we do should be done in such a way to glorify God in the way that we go about it.

I remember reading the testimony of a man, and I think I'm going to have the privilege of meeting this man later on in the fall of this year, but he was a university-level basketball player, and he trusted Christ as his Savior, and he got involved with a church basketball league, and he could run circles around all of these people, and he observed that everybody else was out there just to have fun and to have fellowship and to enjoy one another and the camaraderie and so forth, but this had never been part of his thinking. I mean, when you are on a university scholarship and you're out there on the basketball court, you're driving as hard as you can, and you know, he was really irritated at these other men because they were just having fun and glorifying God, and he wanted to win the game, and then, you know, after a few games, he finally realized that he had the wrong aim as he was out there on the basketball court, that his aim was to glorify God, and in the context of glorifying God, to establish a camaraderie and a fellowship with his teammates and with the players from the other teams. You see, it affects everything we do in life, and sometimes, you know, we can want to glorify God in about 80 or 90 percent of our life, but we've got this 10 or 20 percent over here.

In his case, it would have been basketball, but no, you know, I want to go all out. I want to win the game. I want to be number one, but the apostle Paul says, whatever you do, whether you eat or you drink or you play basketball, whatever you do, you do it for the glory of God.

It was just about a year ago, in fact, it was a year ago this month, that my wife Jane and I were on our way to visit the home of a lady who was dying of cancer. In fact, she died just a year ago this week, and a few days before that, my wife had come into possession of a coupon from a local bakery, and you have to understand this is one of these nutritional bakeries, you know, where a loaf of bread weighs three or four pounds, and you know, it's a really good solid whole something or other, and, you know, it's not like the loaf of bread that I used to buy down in the supermarket until I learned better, that's kind of like a Nerf football, you know, you can throw it up, and it weighs just about that much. You know, this was real bread, and she'd receive this coupon, two for one.

Buy one, get one free. You ladies, I'm sure, are familiar with that kind of thing. Now, it so happened that the occasion of passing out these coupons was that this bakery had opened a new outlet in our neighborhood, about a mile or mile and a half from our home, but it so happened that we weren't going by this new outlet, we were going by the original store on our way to visit this family.

So Jane said to me, let's stop in at the bakery, and let's get a couple of loaves of bread, and we'll bring one home, but we'll take one to this family that we're going to visit. And so we went into the store, and it's a place where the clerks wait on you, you just don't go in and pick it off the shelf, and there's a counter there, and you select your bread, and then they get it, and they hand it over to you, and you pay them the money. And so my wife handed this lady some money and this coupon, this two-for-one coupon, and the young lady, probably about 19 or 20 years of age, said, oh, I'm sorry, this coupon is only good at our new store that's just been opened on the centennial.

Now, the coupon did not say that, but that was the way it was. The coupon was to be good only at the new store. So Jane said, okay, I'll just take one loaf, and she said to me, we'll just take this loaf on over to our friends.

And so she paid for the loaf, and as the young lady was entering the transaction in her cash register, she said to us, you people are so nice to me. Well, I hadn't thought of ourselves as being particularly nice, and so I said, what do you mean? And she said, well, you haven't gotten angry at me. And you can readily understand that all of these people had been coming in all day long with these two-for-one coupons, and they weren't being honored.

Now, just as an aside, I think that was a real goof on the part of the bakery, and I think that they should have. I mean, I'm not just saying because we should have gotten the bread. I mean, you know, they lost a lot of good public relations.

Any of you who are in business can recognize that. But they had made their choice, and they were sticking with it. And so people had been angry all day long, and just the fact that we didn't get angry, she said, you people have been so nice to me.

Now, as we walked out of the store, I said to Jane, how could we have turned that into an opportunity to witness for the Lord? But the point I want to make, and don't get sidetracked on that, because don't let your mind get to working on that. How could that have happened? But listen to the point I want to make. The sobering realization that came to me was this, that as a Christian, I am never off duty.

There's never a holiday as a Christian. There's never a time when I can sort of close up shop as you please, and go do my thing. I am never off duty.

Even in such a simple thing as buying a loaf of bread, I have an opportunity to glorify God or to dishonor God by the way I interact with a sales clerk. And so do you. You are never off duty.

Now, I'm not dealing in trivialities here when I talk about buying a loaf of bread, because life is largely made up of little incidents like this, little routine events, everyday duties, ordinary conversations. This is the mosaic of life, and it is the way we conduct ourselves in these everyday life situations that determine whether we glorify God or we dishonor Him by the way we live. When Jesus said, let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which was in heaven, he wasn't thinking about tremendous heroic deeds as kind of a once in a lifetime, a once a year type of occasion, but he was talking about the way we live our everyday lives.

Several years ago, I decided I would do just admittedly a short Bible study on how we glorify God. You know, it's so easy to let this kind of language, glorify God and enjoy Him forever, roll off of our tongues without really stopping to think, what do we mean when we say that? And the conclusion I came to, there were several ways in which we can glorify God, but the thing that caught my attention was how frequently our actions toward other people determine whether we glorify God or dishonor Him. Turn in your Bibles with me to Titus chapter 2 verses 4 and 5. Titus chapter 2 verses 4 and 5. Actually, I'll begin with verse 3 because you have to have verse 3 in order for 4 and 5 to really make sense.

Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good. Then they can train the younger women, and notice what they're to train the younger women in, to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands so that no one will malign the Word of God. Now, this is a remarkable statement.

The Apostle Paul sets before these younger women by way of telling the older women to teach the younger women, he sets before them a standard of conduct that we might say is the bare minimum, very routine, very ordinary. You don't have to be a hero, a super Christian. And then he says that by doing these things, no one will malign the Word of God, or to put in a positive way, God then will be glorified because God is always either maligned or glorified.

You see, it's again the very ordinary duties. For you wives, the way you conduct yourselves in the home is an opportunity for you to glorify God in the most routine duties, the most humdrum duties that you have. It's an opportunity for you to glorify God.

Drop down to verses 9 and 10. Teach slaves, and again, I would say we could insert the word employees there, but teach slaves to be subject to their masters or their employers in everything, to try to please them, not to talk back to them, and not to steal from them, but to show that they can be fully trusted so that in every way they will make the teaching about God our Savior attractive. Here again, it is the way that they conducted themselves in the ordinary course of their duties as slaves, or in our contemporary setting, as employees.

And he says by doing this, we make the Word of God attractive. And when we make the Word of God attractive, we glorify God. Have you ever thought about the fact that the way you perform your duties at work or if you're self-employed or a professional person, that you perform your professional services can make the teaching about God attractive? I believe that one reason that the gospel is not more attractive to unbelievers is that in our ordinary lives, we are generally no different from unbelievers.

They're careless, and so are we. I used to say, you know, whatever you are, you ought to be the best. That is not good theology.

I don't say that anymore. Whatever you are, you ought to be the best that you can be. There's a difference in those two.

God may not have given you the natural abilities to be the best, the very best, relative to everybody else. And you should not try that. In fact, in 2 Timothy 2.15, the NIV renders it, do your best to present yourself to God, a workman who does not need to be ashamed.

Now, in the original, it's not do your best. It's just make every effort. Be diligent to do it.

But there is this idea in Scripture of doing your best. In the parable of the talents, the one man was given five talents and won two and won one. And you know the story very well.

The man that had received the five talents went out and invested them and earned five more. The one who had received two went out and invested them and earned two more. The one who had received one went out and put it into the ground and did not earn anything.

And he was the one that was condemned. The other two men received the commendation, well done, good and faithful servant. Now, if the man who had received the one talent had gone out and earned one talent, would he have received the same commendation? Assuredly, yes.

Now let me ask you this. Suppose the man who had received the five talents had gone out and had earned three. And the man who had received the two had earned his two.

And let's suppose, for the sake of my illustration, that the man who had received the one talent had earned one. So we have an earning of three talents, two talents and one talent. Now in that scenario, which one would have received the condemnation? The man who earned the three talents.

You say, but he earned more than the other two. Yes, but he did not earn up to his potential. Do your best.

Your best may not be as good as the best of somebody working next to you or playing next to you on the basketball team or sitting next to you in the classroom. But you glorify God by doing your best. Sometimes we think that we glorify God when we don't get drunk and we don't commit adultery and so forth.

And yes, that's true. And we would certainly blaspheme God if we did those things. But here the Apostle Paul is saying to us that we can blaspheme God by failing to do the ordinary things, the things that we should to the best of our ability.

In Romans chapter two, verses 23 and 24, the Apostle Paul says, so God's name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you. He's speaking to the Jews. And he's saying, you've got the law and you can teach the law and do all of these things, but you're not living up to its teaching.

And so God's name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you. Do Canadian Christians ever put the fish symbol, the Christian fish symbol, on the back of the cars? Okay, you do. Okay.

Suppose that here is a Christian who has the Christian fish symbol on the back of his car and he drives in a rude and reckless manner. Now does his fish symbol glorify God? No. It blasphemes God.

God's name would be blasphemed. People will go along and say, look at that guy. He thinks he's a big Christian, got this symbol on the back of his car and look at the way he's driving.

God's name is blasphemed among society, among the pagans out there, the unbelievers, because of the way we often conduct ourselves just in the little things of life. There was a man who was at a Christian college. He was a senior at this college.

And on a particular day, the guest speaker who was scheduled to be there could not arrive because of weather difficulties. And so somehow this senior was pressed into an impromptu chapel message. And after the chapel message, one of his classmates came to him and he said, I wish that I knew God like you do.

And it so happened that this classmate who said that to this speaker was the son of a very prominent minister. Now, I do not know who this prominent minister was. The person who told the story did not divulge that information.

But it was a very prominent minister, presumably an evangelical minister. And so he said, well, he said, I sort of reached down into my bag of tricks as I was talking to him. And so he said, I said to him, well, just think of God like your father, because he assumed that this prominent evangelical minister would be somebody that he could say, oh, if God is like my father, yeah, I can understand that.

But he said this young man stiffened and his fist clenched and his jaws got tight. And he said, if God is like my father, I want nothing to do with him. There was a prominent minister who thought that he was glorifying God in the pulpit, but he was blaspheming him in the home.

And parents, we need to be very, very careful that we do not blaspheme God by the way that we relate to our children. Simon Kistemaker, one of the contemporary New Testament commentators in his comments, in his First Corinthians commentary, wrote these words in First Corinthians 10:31. He said, nothing in our conduct should obstruct God's glory from being reflected in us.

Notice the way he put it, nothing in our conduct should obstruct God's glory from being reflected in us. That is, in everything we do and say, no matter how insignificant, the world should be able to see that we are God's people. Exalting God's glory ought to be our chief purpose in this earthly life.

Notice he said, no matter how insignificant. Exalting God's purpose, God's glory ought to be our chief purpose. What is your chief purpose in life? You and I have many activities.

We have many responsibilities. We have many things we have to do just to make it through life. But our mission in life ought to be to glorify God, and all of these things that we have to do just to make it through life ought to serve that ultimate aim, to glorify Him.

Now for many of us, there are some recurring activities that pose a special challenge. I don't know if any of you have the morning commute. If any of you live in the Toronto area or someplace like that, and you have that morning commute, it's not unusual in the United States for people to have anywhere from a half hour to an hour commute, driving on these freeways, so-called freeways, or oftentimes called the world's largest parking lots.

And that morning commute or that evening commute can pose a special challenge, because you get in that car and your mission becomes to get there, to get home on time, or to get to work on time. And you're focused on that, and you begin to drive like a maniac. And if that's a special recurring challenge for you, every time you get in your car you ought to say, my chief aim is to glorify God in the way I drive.

Some of you may have a tough work environment. Perhaps you work amongst people who are complainers and whiners, and it's so easy in that kind of a situation to join in that. And your aim in that situation ought to be to glorify God by not participating in that complaining and whining and negative attitudes.

Some may have a difficult home situation, or a difficult housing situation, maybe a difficult neighbor next door to you. I recall hearing a man talk about when he and his wife were first married and they lived in an apartment, and the landlord lived in the apartment next to them, and gave them such a hard time. And he talked about how, this man is a minister by the way, and he talked about how that his first initial reaction was to, you know, give back in kind.

You give me a hard time, I'll figure out some way to give you a hard time. And his wife, bless her, and this is often true, isn't it, men had a better idea, and she said, let me bake some bread and take it to them. And they just began to do good deeds one after another.

Finally, it was really, it wasn't the landlord himself, but it was his adult daughter. She came with tears in her eyes, and she wanted to know how to be saved. You see, you can glorify God, or you can dishonor God, just in the way you relate to your landlord.

The point I want to make, and I hope you get it, is that no matter what the activity, no matter what the situation, every situation in life gives us the challenge to either glorify God or to blaspheme Him by our conduct, by the way that we respond to that. My personal one, this is my confession, my personal

recurring situation is flying. I make probably about 25 trips a year, and Colorado Springs, where we live, has very few direct flights.

You know, you can't just go from Colorado Springs to Point A, you've got to go from Colorado Springs to Denver to Point A, or Colorado Springs to Chicago to Point A, or something like that. Coming up to Detroit last weekend, Colorado Springs to Chicago, Chicago to Detroit, and the same way going home. So, each trip involves about four airplane boardings, two going out, two returning.

25 times a year, that's about a hundred airplane boardings a year. Now, any of you who do any flying know that boarding airplanes these days poses a special challenge. I mean, you know, there's just so much space in those overhead compartments, and there are always these people that are bringing on more baggage than they should be, and, you know, you want to get on that airplane first so you can get there ahead of that greedy guy.

I have about a hundred times a year where I have an opportunity to glorify God or to dishonor Him by the way I board that airplane. I'm not talking about just the way I walk down the jetway, but I'm talking about the way I relate to my fellow passengers. The point I want to make is it's these routine things, it's these ordinary things of life that determine the way that we glorify God.

Now, there's another factor here. Our conduct does not glorify God unless it is empowered and enabled by Jesus Christ. In Philippians chapter 1 and verse 11, we read the following words.

Philippians 1 verse 11. Actually here I think again I need to go back to verse 9 to get the beginning of Paul's lengthy sentence here. And this is my prayer that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ filled with the fruit of righteousness.

And notice this phrase, that comes through Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God. Now there's a lot of truth here that we could get at, but one truth that I want to extract from this is that the fruit of righteousness that results in God being glorified only comes through Jesus Christ. That is, it only comes from his power as his power is administered to us by his Holy Spirit.

Or to put it simply, we cannot glorify God by depending on our own innate goodness, our own self-discipline, our own determination. We glorify God as we do so in dependence upon Jesus Christ to enable us through his Holy Spirit. We all know people who would put most Christians to shame by their kindness and their generosity and their gentle conduct.

And they're not even believers, and they do not obviously glorify God in this. If anything, they would glorify themselves. That might not be their particular intent, but we say, oh, isn't she a nice neighbor? Oh, isn't he a wonderful person? Oh, isn't he a diligent worker? We don't want people to say that.

They might say that, but what we really want them to say is, doesn't he have a great God? We want them to say, oh, if that's the difference that Jesus Christ makes in a person's life, then I want to be a Christian. And this happens, dear friends, only as we depend upon Jesus Christ to give us his power through his Holy Spirit. It is only as we intend to glorify God and depend on him in his enabling power that he is indeed glorified in our lives.

Now, let me say one final word, and this, in a sense, is not a final word to this message, but it's a final word to this entire series. And it's not just a PS, an addendum that's added on. It's a very necessary part of

all that I've had to say these evenings.

Two things. First of all, in the application sections that I have put before you, particularly the last three nights, you cannot accomplish this on your own, by your own willpower. Jesus put it very clearly when he said, without me, you can do nothing.

The second thing I want to say is that we could hang around all of our necks a highway sign that says, Work in Progress. Under construction, we are being conformed into the likeness of Jesus Christ. We are not there yet, and we will never be there until the day we die.

It's only when we go to be with him that we become righteous men made perfect. And so, if you see a few spiritual potholes in your life as a result of the messages this week in the morning or the evening, remember that that sign is hung around your neck, Work in Progress. The third thing I want to say is this, and this is perhaps the most important of all.

Your acceptance with God the Father is not based upon how well you apply the challenges that I have presented to you this week. Your acceptance is based upon the performance of Jesus Christ 2,000 years ago. I used to, sometimes in a message I would say, you know, we live in a performance-oriented society.

And I would go through, you know, examples of this, school, athletics, work. You know, I remember in the military getting a fitness report, which means a job appraisal, and so forth. And even sometimes, oftentimes, far too frequently in the home, the acceptance of a child is based upon that child's performance academically or athletically or in music or something.

And the child feels that he or she never quite measures up to the parent's expectation. It's a horrible thing. But the fact is, we live in that kind of a performance-oriented society.

And I used to say to people, but in the Christian life, when you turn and contemplate your relationship with God, you've got to set all of that aside, because you do not relate to God in a performance way. I concluded that that was bad theology and bad psychology. Bad psychology, because it's impossible for a person, or not impossible, it's very difficult for a person who is embroiled in a performance-oriented society in every other aspect to turn to God and then say, oh, okay, God accepts me apart from my performance.

Bad psychology. Bad theology, because this, listen carefully, God is a performance-oriented God. Cursed is everyone that continues not to do everything that is written in the book of the law.

That's performance, dear friends. But the good news is this, listen carefully, Jesus Christ performed in your place. He lived a perfect life, and he lived it as your representative and in your place.

And he died on a cross, and he died as your representative and in your place. And if you are united to Jesus Christ tonight through faith, by the power of the Holy Spirit, if you are in union with him, when he died on that cross, it's just as if you died on that cross. When he lived a perfect life, it's just as if you lived a perfect life.

God accepts you tonight, not on the basis of your performance, but on the basis of the perfect performance of his glorious Son. This obviously doesn't mean then that we should go out and live as we please. It means that in gratitude to him and in joy of the relationship that we have with him through Christ that we do seek, we earnestly desire, and we make it our sincere effort to do those things that are pleasing to him, knowing that even our best deeds are still stained with sin.

And so as you leave this conference tomorrow or tonight, do not leave thinking, well, if I could just get my act together. Jerry Bridges has given us one, two, three, four, five applications to make, and let's see if I can remember them and, you know, improve in all of these, then God will love me. No, dear friends, that's not the way it works.

God loved you from before the foundation of the world. God loved you when he saw all of your imperfection, all of your sin. He loves you through Christ and in gratitude to him for that unconditional love.

And I sort of shy away from that term unconditional love because it's been abused, and some people have taken that to mean go out and live the way you please, you know, God loves everybody unconditionally. No, that's not it. If you're in Christ, God loves you unconditionally and in gratitude to him for that.

And in the joy of the acceptance that you have through Christ, you go out and you seek to live all life to his glory. Whether you eat or whether you drink, you do it all to the glory of God. Amen.

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