

# (Youth Bible School 2007) Christ Is the Believer's Goal

by John D. Martin

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*Christ is the believer's goal, and we should rejoice in the Lord by prioritizing Him in our lives and avoiding the danger of focusing on things.*

**Duration:** 1:02:49

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:33, Romans 1:16-17, Philippians 4:4

**Topics:** "Christian Focus", "Spiritual Discipline"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of having a focused life and not being distracted by other goals that contradict serving Christ. He uses the analogy of an athlete who is intently focused on the goal ahead and warns against veering off track. The speaker also highlights the danger of putting confidence in worldly things such as reputation, fame, and achievement. The sermon concludes with a reminder to examine one's past, persevere in the present, and live with a focus on the future.

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## Transcript

Hello, this is Brother Denny. Welcome to Charity Ministries. Our desire is that your life would be blessed and changed by this message.

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These messages are offered to all without charge by the free will offerings of God's people. A special thank you to all who support this ministry. Shall we pray? Father, we thank you so much for your pure word of truth to us in your scriptures.

We thank you, Lord, for the absolute confidence we can have in what it says. Lord, we thank you we don't have to do any research or verification on the reality of what you've told us, but we can just take it and go with it with the absolute confidence that it will produce the results that are promised therein. And I pray, help us to open our hearts today to learn what we can about you and your will for us and your good pleasure.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. I want you to look today at a verse we went over quickly yesterday.

Well, we didn't go over it so quickly, but we had a little different emphasis yesterday and I didn't center on it and I wanted to do that here at the beginning of this class period. It is verse 11. Every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

Now, the original creed of the early church was very short. It was kurios. I don't know how this was spelled.

It may have been yesu. I don't know how Jesus is in Latin. But anyway, it was kurios Jesus or Jesus.

And this word kurios is the word for Lord. Now, that word has been robbed of its meaning because we don't have lords anymore. Even in the Middle Ages when the Anabaptists were preaching, the word Lord struck a very definite response in the hearts of people.

They were thinking of the Lord who lived up on the top of the hill, who was in charge of all the land around and they were peons who had no authority, who were hardly even slaves. They basically belonged to the land and that Lord had absolute authority, life and death over them. And so when they said Lord, that's what was conjured up in their minds.

But if you go back to the time of the Bible, you had the Caesars. And this was what they said in relation to Caesar. Kurios Caesar.

And it was understood that when they said that, they were recognizing Caesar as the absolute authority, not to be questioned, to be obeyed in every detail on pain of life. It was also during the time of the Pax Romana. And the emperors prided themselves during that period of time in being in charge of bringing in a new and a better order of society.

And society during that time was experiencing an unprecedented period of peace. I will say this, and that is the early church claimed primary responsibility for that peace and they never got tired of telling the Roman society that the reason why the whole world was at peace was because the king of peace had come right at the beginning of the period and because his kingdom had been set up and it was a kingdom of peace, the world was experiencing peace. And it's interesting to me that the first signs of that peace disappearing was the first compromise in the area of non-resistance.

172 was the first record we have of a soldier joining the church and that was just about the time when the Pax Romana was ending. And the church felt that that was the reason why. Because the church's peace testimony was gone.

And I'm just going to put in my little plug right here. The most disastrous compromise the church ever made in all of its history was right there. It surrendered the whole kingdom of peace that maybe could have been altogether different as far as the world is concerned.

And because of that compromise we had the crusades, terrific abuse of human life, we had the Inquisition, we had slavery, we had the treatment of the American Indians, we had the conquistadors, I mean just a whole Pandora's box of human rights violations and murders and killings in the name of Christianity. But anyway, that's off my subject. When the early church said, Kurios Jesus, there were two things that were in their minds.

One is that Jesus was going to be their absolute ruler. And number two, he was going to be bringing in a new society, a counterculture to the Kurios Caesar. And the Roman government understood that too.

And that's why the Christians got into bad trouble, because they would not say Kurios Caesar, they said Kurios Jesus. And it was a definite threat to the Roman world order and the life of the early church was a threat to that order in the sense that it superseded it and was a challenge to almost everything that it represented. As you've been hearing this week on the two kingdom idea, it was another kingdom set in great contrast to Roman rule and Roman society and Roman law and everything Roman.

Alright, why do I say all of that? Because the content of Lord has never changed. The understanding has changed and people are making a different response to Jesus as Lord today than what they did back then. They understood very clearly when they said, Kurios Jesus, he was totally in charge.

In fact, one of the words that Jesus used himself in one of his parables, in which he's talking about a householder. This is the word that he used. Does anybody see a familiar word in that word? That's a Greek word.

It means householder. Just raise your hand. Yes, brother.

Despot. How many know what a despot is? One person. A despot is an absolute ruler.

When he speaks, if he says jump, you say how high, how far, where shall I land and when? Now, since you don't know what it means, I can't ask my next question. I was going to ask, what's your response to that? Is that how many? Well, I'm not going to get a good answer on this. Most people's response to this out there who know what that word means is very negative.

Because when they think of a despot, they think of a Hitler. They think of a Mussolini. They think of a Stalin.

They think of a Mao Zedong. They think of a Castro or an Idi Amin. Because their concept is if someone has absolute control, they're probably going to use it to their own advantage.

And they're going to take advantage of everybody. And I personally think that's one of the reasons why people will not completely bow their knee to Jesus. Danny's been alluding at this in his messages.

They're afraid that absolute control is a dangerous thing. And it is. To give somebody absolute control of your life is a very risky thing.

Unless it's Jesus. Because Jesus said, take my yoke upon you and learn of me. You're going to have to learn to know me.

I am meek and lowly in heart. And ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

Now, there's only one reason why Jesus wants control of your life. And that is because he is the only person that can arrange it in a way that you will be completely blessed. You don't know enough to do that, but he does.

And he's like the surgeon. When he operates, he wants complete control of that operation. He doesn't want you partly awake, giving him advice as to what to do with your kidneys.

You would die on the operating table. But if he has total charge and can do exactly what needs to be done, probably it'll be OK. Jesus is a benevolent despot.

He loves you more than you could ever have wishes that were good about yourself. And he wants to take your whole life because he knows how to arrange every part of it. So that you will be supremely blessed with every aspect of his rule in your life.

And not only that, he is setting up another kingdom. A new world order, if you please. Just like the emperors did.

With all the promise of a better society. And he wants you to be a part of that. Well, I just said all that as introduction.

And all of the people who have surrendered to him have gone down the same route that we had yesterday. Or at least they're in the process of that. Stepping down, down, down, down, until they become, as it says here, harmless and blameless, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation of people that can be absolutely trusted.

They're kind, they're gentle, they're loving, they're caring. They do not dominate people when they're given the opportunity. They're a different world order.

They believe that to be exalted is to take a humble route. To get the best out of life is to take the low road. And that's what they apply to every situation in life.

Now, we had the picture of Jesus doing that. And it looked pretty ideal. And some people would say, well, he was Christ.

I don't know if I can really be that self-forgetting as what he is. And so he gives us three examples here of ordinary people, starting with himself. Let's read what he says about himself.

Holding forth the word of life, verse 16, that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain, neither labored in vain. Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you. For the same cause also do you joy and rejoice with me.

Now, Paul is picturing in the pagan world. When they did a sacrifice, they would put their sacrifice there on the altar. And then the very last thing they did was they popped the cork on the most expensive wine that they could get.

And they would dump that expensive wine on the sacrifice as just sort of a final touch to the sacrifice before they lit the fire. And Paul says, you folks are in tribulation and you're suffering. And it would just be a tremendous privilege if my blood could be the wine that was poured on your sacrifice and we would all joy to sacrifice our lives together.

So Paul had this characteristic that we were talking about. Let's go on to the next one. The next one is Timothy.

This level of submission was very rare in Paul's day. And it's very rare today. But it's attainable.

And Timothy, he says, is the only one that he knows that really has this mind the way he should. Because he says in verse 20, For I have no man like-minded who will naturally care for your state, for all seek their

own and not the things which are Jesus Christ. Now it's interesting.

Paul considered Timothy a great candidate for the pastorate of his churches. And I think he was grooming Timothy to take over after he left. But we don't have a picture of a very strong person here.

2 Timothy 1, 4, 6, and 7 picture him. Paul says he was mindful of Timothy's tears. He realized Timothy was an emotionally tender person.

He urges him to stir up his gift. He tells him, God has not given us a spirit of fear. You sort of get the idea this guy was sort of timid.

But this guy was willing to risk his life to go back over those same mountains that Epaphroditus had gone over to come to Paul to bring the gift from the Philippians. Timothy was prepared to go with him back over those same mountains, back into that hostile city and risk his life for the church and for Paul. And so he had this characteristic too.

And I just point out the greatest characteristic for a pastor is not that he'd be a great preacher, although it's wonderful if he is. And the Bible says he should be apt to teach. But the most outstanding characteristic of a pastor is this characteristic.

And I must give public recognition here today. We had such a pastor at Shippensburg. His name was Lynn Martin, and he's not with us anymore.

And I often tell people that his authority was so strong and so respected in our congregation because he out-served all of us. He not only preached, he repaired our cars, he built our houses, he fixed our appliances. I mean, you name it, Lynn was there.

If a child needed somebody to help with his algebra, he'd take a half a day off, and he did that with my daughter. He was a busy pastor with all kinds of projects around the community, took a half day to come and sit down and help her with her algebra. And that's how he lived.

And no wonder when he spoke, we all listened because we knew he cared for us without any self-interest. Oh, God, give us more pastors like that. If any of you ever becomes a pastor, I want this to ring in your ears, that there's no greater quality of pastorship than that.

And then I hope you can preach too. But that will be a secondary item in the success of your pastorate. It'll be an important one.

I don't want to minimize that, but it won't be more important than this one. All right? What about Epaphroditus? I'm going over these rather fast. You can read what it says here.

Epaphroditus, we've been talking about. He's the one that risked his life to come to Rome to bring the gift from the Philippians and be a personal servant to Paul. Something I've got to say, when you went to prison in those days, they didn't feed you like they do now or provide your clothes or so on.

You were totally dependent on some relative bringing food to you or bringing clothes to you and ministering to your needs. I mean, they put you in prison and you were there. And so the Philippians knew when they heard Paul was in prison, somebody would have to be there to care for him.

And so they sent this Epaphroditus with this letter, and he stayed there to care for Paul. And then he got sick. And the interesting thing about Epaphroditus is he almost died, but that wasn't his greatest concern.

His greatest concern was that the word had gotten back to Philippi that he was sick almost to death, and he worried because they were worried. He wasn't worried about his own life. He was worried because this church was in consternation that he'd heard that he was sick almost to death.

So Paul's going to send him back so that the church can be comforted, even though Paul says he could use him there, but he wanted the church back there. Do you see how this is all working together? Oh, to God we had churches like this and people like this. All right.

The Christians were like that. The Romans said they not only care for their own, they care for those of our society whom we do not want to care for. That was the reputation of the early Christians.

At Carthage there was a group known as the Gamblers. Why were they called the Gamblers? Because there had been a plague and everybody fled the city, and they were the only ones that stayed to take care of the sick, and because of them the city survived. It says that this man was not regarding his own life.

The word there means hazarding. Paul couldn't say enough about this man. He says he's a messenger.

That's the word for apostle. He says he ministered. That particular word means supreme benefactor of the state.

Paul said men like this are rare and they are precious. All right. We must hurry into today's lesson.

Let's turn over to chapter 3 and get started on the spiritual mind. Joy in spite of things. Christ is the believer's goal rather than things.

Now Paul starts off saying, Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord, to write the same things to you. To me, indeed, it is not grievous, but for you it is safe. Now I want you to turn over to chapter 4 and just look at verse 4. Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice.

I honestly think that here in chapter 3 in verse 1, Paul intended to end his epistle. He did this in a number of epistles too. He did it in the book of Ephesians.

You can see very clearly where he was intending to end. Then he went on and something came to his mind that just had to be said. And so he put in a big interlude and then he comes back again with the same phrase and now here's the ending.

But you can see where he intended to end to begin with. I think it was going to end here. But there was something very important that he wanted to say and that's what we're going to be looking at today.

But he does say here and where he finally ends his epistle, Rejoice in the Lord, and again I say rejoice. It's later on in chapter 4 that's what he says. Rejoice in the Lord.

Our strength is in celebrating King Jesus. Why is our strength there? Because if you celebrate King Jesus, you are looking at Him as a hero and people always move by an inexorable law of the soul toward the hero that they worship. Look at the heroes people worship today.

And you see all the trappings of that hero finally appear on them and by them and through them. I mean they imitate this hero. And so he said rejoice in the Lord.

Worship Him. By the way, the word worship is the word worthship. It is the thing that gains your highest priority.

What are you worshipping? I challenge you to list the ten things in your life that you consider the most important. And then I suggest that you cross off the tenth one. And then I suggest you cross off the next one, wherever that one is that's next and least important.

And keep crossing them off until you get them all crossed off but one. And if you do that honestly, you will know what you worship. What you worship is the number one priority on your list.

And that's why Paul is saying rejoice in the Lord. Celebrate King Jesus. Celebrate King Jesus.

Just you can't do it often enough because you will move toward that person if he truly is number one in your life. And you're expressing him as the number one worth thing in your experience, which is what worship is. Alright? Note how many times he uses the word things in this chapter.

We're going to move now into the little parenthesis that he puts in his farewell or his closing statements. In chapter 3, we find the word things in verse 7. We find it twice in verse 8. We find it twice in verse 13. We find it once in verse 19.

And we find it once in verse 21. Obviously, he is concerned that people not put their focus on things. Now, I want to remind you or call your attention to the fact that when he's talking about things, he's not just talking about what we think of as things.

He's not just talking about what we think of as tangible items. He's also talking, in fact, primarily talking about intangibles such as reputation, such as fame, such as achievement, such as morality. He says, don't put your confidence in things.

Alright? So, he examines his life. And he gives us a picture of the past, the present, and the future. Socrates said, the unexamined life is not worth living.

And Paul would agree with that. And so, you look on your outline, you see what we're going to have here. An accountant tallies up the past.

Paul looks back over his past and tries to evaluate what it was. Then we have the change in metaphor. And we have the athlete strives in the present.

And then we have the future and alien lives for the future. Those are the three things we're going to look at. So, let's first of all look at what Paul says in the beginning here of an accountant tallying up the past.

Number two, verse two. Beware of dogs. Beware of evil workers.

Beware of the concision. Now, you can tell right away that the apostle Paul really has some strong feelings here. These are really negative terms.

And it's interesting, they're paradoxical because the dogs that he's talking about were the Jews. The Judaizers. Who believed that you have to say kurios Jesus to be justified.

And then you need the law to sanctify your actual life. And so, they were going around to these different communities where Paul was preaching and they were saying, alright, you've received Jesus, that's fine. Now, you need to be circumcised and keep the law and that'll be the finishing touch on your spiritual experience.

And Paul withstood these people to the face. And we're going to see why. And to show you the strength of his feelings, he uses three bewares here with the strongest, most fierce language.

Beware of dogs. Here were these people who thought they were righteous and Paul says they're dogs. Now, a dog in that time was not the nice little puppy dogs we had.

They were curs running around eating scraps off the street and yipping and snapping at people. Dogs were not pets in those days. They were scavengers.

They were despised. And Paul says these people are dogs. Now, that's a strong warning against anything that resembles Judaism.

Alright? The next thing he calls them is evil workers. Well, they were the ones that thought they were the good people. And then he calls them the concision.

Well, the word concision here means mutilators. These are strong terms. These Judaizers are dogs.

They're not good works people. They're bad works people. And they are mutilators.

And what Paul is saying is that these people were never going to arrive at the standard which was Christ. And we're going to see why in just a few moments. But I would just call this to your attention.

Any practice that you are involved in, religious practice, that is not focused directly on the person of Jesus is nothing more than mutilation. That's all it is. He said circumcision, I think most people sitting here know what that was.

He said that's all you're doing is mutilating your bodies. That's all you're doing. It amounts to nothing more than that.

And you people who are trying to get people to be circumcised, you're going out and just mutilating people. You're doing an awful thing. And it's evil work and your dogs.

Well, that's pretty strong. Well, what he's trying to show is what he learned. And we need to look now at his own evaluation of his own life when he was involved in that mentality.

True religion is a focus only on Christ. Would you notice he says those we are the circumcision which worship God in the spirit and rejoice in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh. Now, what we're going to find out when we look at Paul here is Paul finally realized that the standard was Christ and everything else is going to fall short of that standard.

And that's why he's so vehement. He realizes that any other goal, any other focus, any other method, any other approach than to aim at the standard of Christ is going to fall short. And what is the word that the Bible uses to mean that you fall short? Sin.

And so Paul, this was very crucial to Paul. And I will say this to you before we even get started. If the things you do are because only because somebody else told you that's the right thing to do unless it was your parents.

I want you to obey your parents. But if you're only doing it for that reason or you're only doing it because you have a moral code in your own mind. I don't smoke.

I don't drink or associate with the people that do. That's a code you have in your mind. Paul's not going to be happy with you.

The only thing that's going to suffice is the things that Jesus Christ represents and you're doing them out of devotion and a passion for all that he is. And that's not works righteousness. That's faith and obedience.

But we're getting ahead of the story. We need to recognize that without Christ we can do what? Nothing. With Christ we can do all things through Christ which strengthens me.

And so Paul says we can have no confidence in the flesh as the origin for our decisions and our actions. Anything that originates with our logic and our flesh and all of that is going to fall far short of the standard because the standard is going to be a lot higher than that when it's all said and done and we're going to settle for something less. But if anybody could have said that he did as much as the flesh could ever do to do it in the flesh no one ever exceeded Paul.

He was the greatest spiritual athlete that ever lived under this system. And so now he tells us what happened in the past and how if anybody wants to try it they're going to have to supersede him. And this will be pretty hard.

Let's go down through this list. It starts in verse five. He says he was not a proselyte.

He was circumcised the eighth day. He was a Jew from the moment of his birth. He had blue blood in his veins and the ceremony that he was supposed to go through to be a bona fide Jew started on the eighth day just like it was supposed to.

You can't do any better than that. He was a Jew. 100 percent blue blood Jew.

Number two. He was not an Ishmaelite or an Edomite that also were descendants of Abraham. He was an Israelite.

He was a descendant of Jacob. Number three. He was from the tribe of Benjamin which was the only son of Jacob that was born in the promised land to his favorite wife Rachel.

He was. This was the tribe from which the first king of Israel came. This was the tribe that remained with Judah when the other ten tribes separated and went into idolatry.

Mordecai was a Benjamite in the book of Escher. When they returned from exile it was a pitiful little remnant of the millions that were in exile. Fifty thousand of them returned and they were children of Judah and Benjamin.

So Benjamin numbered among those who returned from exile to go back to rebuild the temple and take all the sufferings and so on and leave all their luxuries that they had by that time in Persia. He was a Hebrew which means he was not a Hellenist. He had not like many Jews compromised and adopted Greek

customs.

He did not adopt Greek customs and in fact there was a whole sect called the Sadducees that had adopted Greek customs. They had built a stadium in Jerusalem and they had basically quit believing in the Messiah. They quit believing in the spirits.

They quit believing in angels. They basically just used Moses' five books of the laws of moral code and they didn't believe in anything supernatural. Paul had nothing to do with that.

He was a Hebrew and he was a Pharisee which was the conservative group against the Sadducees. The Pharisees were the descendants of Mattathias who when a Greek I think it was a Syrian man came into Jerusalem and burned a pig on the altar and they started this great campaign against Judaism. Mattathias and his sons came out of the woodwork and killed that man and there was a war and they won and ruled Jerusalem for a hundred years under Phariseeism.

And the Pharisees had a wonderful history and Jesus never accused them of not having the truth. He just said don't do what they do. What they say they're pretty right in what they say but just don't do what they do.

So this was the place where the true torch was burning of Judaism and Paul said I am a Pharisee. See they had their liberals and conservatives in those days too. The Pharisees were the conservatives.

They were the ones who were holding on to everything that Judaism had represented. Of course they went way beyond it and wrote a bunch of crazy rules stacked one upon another until they became ridiculous but they were trying to do what was right and they believed in spirits and resurrection and angels and all that supernatural part that we believe in and then you had the Sadducees who had given in to Greek culture. They were Hellenists.

They didn't believe in anything supernatural. They basically adopted Greek customs and got involved in everything Greek. By the way they were the priests during that time.

If you want to know what was going on in the time of Christ the Sadducees were in the religious control. They were in control of the temple and they were materialists to the nth degree and they determined they were going to kill Jesus the first time he cleansed the temple because he wrecked their economic system. Alright.

Paul says I was a Pharisee. Pharisee means the separated one. There were never more than 6,000 of these men.

There was a small minority. This was the highest ideal of Judaism. These were the spiritual athletes of Israel.

They kept the smallest detail of the law. So here we have Paul. Blue blood Jew from the tribe of Jacob or descendant of Jacob from the tribe of Benjamin.

Not a Hellenist. A Pharisee. And then the last one is he was zealous.

He was zealous. Persecuting the church. Now that doesn't probably mean anything to you but that word zeal was what every Christian God-fearing Jew aspired to show.

Remember back there in the Old Testament I forget what was happening and somebody went to was it when the men took strange fire into the temple or something had happened and somebody from the tribe said here I'm going to show you the zeal of the Lord and he went in there and slew those people. The highest idea was to not only have religion but to be zealous in your religion. By the way that's not a bad idea.

Zeal is more than just doing what you have to do. Zeal is doing it with a burning heart. And Paul said my persecution of the church proves that I was a bona fide Pharisee because I had zeal and that was the proof that I was one of the good Pharisees.

I personally think he persecuted the church to prove that to himself. I think he did that to prove how zealous he was in a desperate attempt to finally get out of Judaism an answer to his own heart. And God met him right there of course and dealt with him.

So here's this guy that's not only religious he is passionately religious. And then he says he was also blameless. Now that's an incredible statement that he was able to keep the law and be blameless.

And I don't think Paul was lying. That must have been true or he wouldn't have said it. There wasn't a demand that he had not fulfilled.

And from what we've heard people say about the law that seems incredible because we say that was impossible. But here Paul says that he did that as far as he was concerned he had done that. I'm not sure he had but as far as he was concerned he had been blameless.

So here's this guy that has done everything to the nth degree in this system. But what's he say? But what things were gained to me those I counted lost for Christ. One day he met Christ.

And we all know the story. And what he saw was that he was was the embodiment of everything that godliness was. And he looked at Christ and he looked at himself and all this stuff that he's listed and he said by comparison this is manure.

There's the standard. Here I am and there's the standard. And it's a couple light years beyond me.

I haven't even come close to what God requires. It's a little bit like if you had a river and here comes the typical righteous Jew and he's going to jump the river and he jumps as hard as he can and that's how far he gets. Here comes somebody else that's a little more spiritual.

He gets that far. Here comes Paul that fabulous athlete of spirituality. And my he does well.

But he's still in the water. He saw that the whole system wouldn't get him across the river and he couldn't do any better. He'd already done it.

He couldn't jump one foot further. He'd practiced to get that far and that was it. He was up against his limit.

Anyway, so what he did was he decided to list another way of looking at this is he decided to list all his all his credits as an accountant so he listed them all. Listed all these things. And lo and behold on this side was Christ.

And it didn't matter how Paul looked at this he could not get this thing to balance. It just wouldn't. Christ was so much more.

In fact, I love Romans 5. It's one of my favorite passages. In that passage Paul talks about how much more than. To Paul, Christ was much much more.

And so he says in verse 8 those I saw that I had to take a different approach. In fact, I saw that this was standing totally in the way. This had to be completely discarded.

I had to pursue this. I had to come to terms with this standard. And so he says but what things were gained to me those I counted lost for Christ yea doubtless I count.

Notice these words count. These are accounting terms. I count all things but lost for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord for whom I have suffered the loss of all things there's things that I do count them but done that I may win Christ.

When he said Lord, what will thou have me to do? And that's what you have to say. No qualifications. No strings attached.

And he's a benevolent Lord. I want you to leave here with that ringing in your ears. He is a benevolent despot.

He's not going to do you anything but bless you. Now he may have to discipline you and there may be some pain involved that there will be I guarantee you there'll be a cross. But the cross will be a blessing.

It's all going to be blessing. But you have to say Jesus is Lord in the sense that those early Christians meant it and even the people in the time of the Anabaptists. Jesus is Lord.

I have no rights. No qualifications on that statement. Jesus is Lord.

And when that happens, what Paul realized in Romans chapter 4, if you read it, another chapter that is just full of accounting terms, Jesus puts in our account 100 percent righteousness. Paul says he imputes it to us. And now the Calvinists like to run off with that and say, oh well, now the account's okay.

It's wonderful. I don't have to worry about anything now. There's only one reason he puts that in your account.

Denny said it the other day, the money's in the bank. What do you do with a bank account? Come on. You write checks or use debit cards or whatever you do nowadays.

Put on there whatever it is that you need. It's in the account. You have an enemy.

You need to forgive. You say, oh Lord, I don't have any forgiveness. But you've told me to love.

I'm going to go to the grocery store and I'm going to buy groceries. I'm going to carry them there. Now, this is not works righteousness.

I'm doing it at your command. This is an act of faith. He's an enemy.

And I have no desire to bless him. But you told me to bless him. I don't feel like blessing him.

I don't know if I'm capable of blessing him. But I know I'm supposed to bless him. I'm going to go to the store and I'm going to buy groceries and I'm going to take them to him And I'm depending on you Lord to dump the forgiveness and all the things that I need that I do not have into this act so that it is a blessed act

that supernaturally works the way you want it to work.

How many understand what I'm saying? Paul saw finally there was a way if not to absolutely attain that standard, at least to get moving toward it. And to have the things happening in his life that maybe were not completely perfect at least were genuine acts of righteousness. By the way, when you reach out to do what I just told you, that is a genuine act of righteousness.

Now, our Calvinist friends will tell us that's works righteousness. It's works righteousness if you don't do it only because you thought that's what you should do because of your own moral code. But if you honestly believe that Jesus has directed it and you're obeying him, then all of that righteousness in your account, that supernatural capital that you don't have will flow into that act.

And it won't be your works. It'll be the works of Jesus Christ. It'll be a genuine righteous act because it's his act.

It's his power. It's his motivation. It's his direction.

It's his work through you. And Paul, when he got ahold of that, he saw that that whole other system was just totally wrought. It's a genuine process of Christ's righteousness expressing itself in us.

Paul saw that Paul said, I'm not ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth. Let's turn to that.

I'm not getting quoted totally. Romans chapter 1. Yeah, this is the part I couldn't remember right off. 16 of chapter 1. For I'm not ashamed of the gospel of Christ for it is the power of God unto salvation, salvaging, to everyone that believeth, to the Jew first and also the Greek for therein, in that salvaging process, is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith one act after another like I just described.

And as you cooperate with Christ as he directs you and empowers you, it's from faith to faith and your trust in him and your ability to respond to him keeps growing and your faith grows stronger and stronger through faith, obedience, and confirmation. The just shall live by his faith. And that's Paul's great theme, which of course has been misunderstood by many people.

They don't see the practical part of this. They see what I just pictured in the box. They run off with that, say it's signed, sealed, and delivered.

When God opens my account, all that's going to be there is the righteousness of Jesus Christ. But the Bible makes it very clear if we don't continue therein letting this process work, this will disappear. All right.

Well, so this is what Paul is saying now. He's saying he's living by a new motive, a new passion, a new goal, a new desire, new feelings, new power, new perspective, new will, new standard, everything. He's become a new creature just like that butterfly that comes out of the cocoon.

How many have ever done that? That's something to see. That butterfly comes out of there. We studied it in biology.

It has a different digestive system. It has different transportation, boys. It has, you know, everything's different.

There's nothing about that butterfly that resembles the thing that went in that cocoon. And my college biology teacher admitted, and he was one of the top genetic scientists in the United States, he stood, I remember the day he stood in front of the class and said, we do not know what happens in there. But it is the best example of the transformed life and we don't know how that happens either, but it's a reality.

You can't deny the fact that there's a butterfly flying around instead of a grasshopper hopping around. I mean, you can argue all you want to scientifically about the ins and outs of the whole thing, but the fact of the matter is the butterfly is going to just fly away anyway. And the same thing is true with a Christian.

When a Christian says, Lord, what's what thou have me to do? That transformation takes place in this whole process of genuine expression of the Christ life through us begins. And the process keeps working its way toward the absolute standard of Christ. That's the clearest I can explain it.

Paul has a new standard of perfect standard and he is really excited about it and he can't get enough of it. Verse 9 and be found in him not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ and the righteousness which is of God by faith that I may know him. That absolute perfect standard that had him so excited and was so beautiful and so powerful and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings being made conformable unto his death if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.

And he recognized that suffering was a part of it. And we live in the United States and we don't have this aid. It is an aid to Christianity that we do not have.

But every person who has lived in persecuted circumstances will tell you that it was a tremendous antidote to the flesh all the time to live under suffering and the more the flesh dies or when the flesh dies I shouldn't say the more when the flesh dies new life keeps coming forth. All right. Now he changes the metaphor.

If you notice back in verse eight he used the word win. He's been talking in accounting terms. Now he's going to talk in athletic terms and we're on to part B. An athlete strives in the present.

Now let's talk about athletes. The racer is always striving toward the goal and where is the goal? It's always ahead until he gets there and we're not going to be there until we're at the end of this life. All right.

But the racer is always pursuing. Paul has been grasped by Christ. He said he was apprehended.

Christ got a hold of Paul and put him in the race and then he went and stood at the end. And Paul said I was apprehended by Christ. I was put in this race and I'm going to race to the person who apprehended me and I'm going to apprehend him.

All right. The prize is Christ. What are the characteristics of an athlete? What we have them here.

Verse 12 tells us that an athlete is not complacent about past accomplishments. He is flat out pressed toward the goal. No compromises.

He is stretching every nerve. We have a song in our hymn book that says Awake my soul stretch every nerve and press with vigor on a holy zeal commands thy whatever I forget in thy eternal song. All right.

By the way if you don't keep your eyes on the goal if you start looking at yourself how well am I doing or looking around and sort of getting oh I'm sort of ahead so I can sort of slow down a little bit you're probably going to veer off to the side and get outside the lines and by the way if you get outside the lines you lose

because you messed up. All right. So this an athlete is always intently focused on that goal that's out ahead.

Number two I just already said it his life is focused. Paul says this one thing I do. There are too many people that are trying to serve Christ plus some other goals that are in contradiction to Christ.

They're trying to do them both at the same time. And Paul says there's one thing I do. There's power when somebody has his life focused.

A river that's just out all over the land like a flood doesn't do anything but you get it in a channel. That water has power. Or a laser beam where you have light all lined up light waves all lined up.

That has power. And the person who gets his life focused and it's Jesus Jesus only that is the passion of his life that life will have power. He says I forget the past.

My life is focused. There are a lot of people dragging baggage along from the past. Oh so and so did so and so and I can't get over it.

I had some trauma in my childhood and I can't get over it. This person did me wrong and I had to go to another church because I couldn't handle that. They're dragging this great big pile now no runner goes out on the track and takes a great big pile of garbage along and tries to run and win a race.

And Paul says I let it all go. If somebody has wronged me I forgive them and I go running. I mean Jesus said that.

He said if you don't forgive men their trespasses I won't if you won't set them free I won't set you free.

The best example of a person who understood that and this was long before the Bible he had no Bible he had no colleagues to encourage him he didn't hear a sermon on Sunday morning there were no biographies there weren't any printing presses he had nobody to encourage him or instruct him or do anything to help him his name was Joseph and you want to talk about somebody that had a past the psychologist that had a heyday with this guy they'd have taken him over and put him through their program and you'd have never heard a thing of him but he named his first son Manasseh does anybody know what Manasseh means well don't you ever forget it yes that's a good guess but that's not right thank you God has made me a man do you think he could not have told you what his brothers did to him he could

have told you every detail of it do you think he could have told you what Potiphar's wife did to him he could have told you every detail of it do you think he could have told you that the baked butler forgot him in prison he could have told you every detail of it what does it mean God made me to forget it means that he had forgiven all of those people and God had taken the pain out of the memories and when you forgive by the way the reason we don't forgive is because forgiveness is costly it means we got to let that scoundrel go free as if he never did it just the way Jesus did to us you know we say oh we're Jesus justified us just as if we never sinned that's what he's asking you to do to everybody else but in order to do that you've got to embrace the injustice to your own heart and all

the hurt that goes with it and we don't want to do that let me promise you something if you do it God will make you to forget you can afford to just go ahead and do that just embrace all the injustice and all the indignity and all the hurt of that situation to yourself and let that person go free that by the way that's one of these supernatural things and God will make that possible and he'll take away the pain he says I forget I

don't drag along a bunch of baggage I don't have a bunch of unresolved relationships I don't have a bunch of churches that I've gone through and I can't forget and forgive I don't have all you know most people are dragging along a pretty big pile of baggage and they expect to win this race and then we're surprised when so many lose out and don't make it an

athlete furthermore verse 14 is persevering Eric Liddell you all have heard the name probably Eric Liddell ran the 440 yard race or at least he was started out to run it and somehow the athletes all got bunched up at the first corner and jostled around and pitched him off somehow he got bumped completely out of the track and fell down like a flash Eric Liddell jumped back up again gave it all he got and right before the finish line passed the rest of them and won the race he never stopped and said you guys threw me out of the race I've already lost it he got up and kept running and an athlete doesn't get up and do that he jumps up and he gets back his purpose is to win the race furthermore an athlete is disciplined he disciplines his life so that he can lay aside all the distractions and

he presses toward the mark of the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus alright but the rules must be kept did you notice that it says here verse 15 let us therefore as many as be perfect be thus minded and if anything you'd be otherwise minded God should reveal even this unto you nevertheless where to we now here comes the plural pronoun we've been talking about winning as a team we've been talking about fellowship we've been talking about the fact that it was never intended that you live the Christian life by yourself by your own individual ideas and standards without the help of your brethren we are in an army we are warriors fighting together running a race together however you want to say it and wars and athletics have rules and there's a beautiful picture here it says

we're all pressing we're not all there yet but you know as a congregation we say well now we can make some progress here and then we all make that progress together and we keep the rules and we move a little further and then we keep everything we learn about Jesus we keep we don't lose any of it but you know how it is churches go along they start off and pretty soon things start dropping off and things become much more lax and undisciplined and the whole no pulses no let's all run together and whatever ground we have gained let's keep that ground by the way the word rule here is the word canon I don't want to push that too far but it sounds a little bit like some sort of church order you go study it and make out of it whatever you want to make out of it but that's the word where unto

we've already attained let us walk by the same canon let us mind the same thing let's do this in lock, stock, phalanx fashion alright it's a team effort and there is such a thing as abiding by tangible accountable behavior now let somebody else discuss that but the fact of the matter is Jim Thorpe was the hero at the 1912 Olympics I forget how many games he participated in and won it was unbelievable and he won the medals the gold medal and the trophy but the next year they found out that he had violated the rules he had played semi-professional baseball and of course the Olympic gamers are not supposed to be involved in any kind of professional sports this is amateur sports they found out he had played semi-professional baseball he forfeited his amateur standing and they took away all of

his achievements his gold medals and his trophy it's not what I or the spectators think and people were very upset because they they had all seen him do something fabulous but it's not what we think it's whether Christ was honored and obeyed that's what it is well we just have time for an alien list for the future now we have Paul weeping in this very joyful letter Paul is weeping something really really really has him frustrated that he would be weeping in a letter saturated with joy he said he saw many Christians notice many just the way Jesus said many shall say in that day Lord Lord haven't we done this haven't we

done this many notice many he said many professing Christians are enemies of the cross of Christ now he was speaking specifically of the Gnostics the Gnostics believed that

everything was spiritual that well it's a big philosophy I won't get into in other words they believed that religion had to do with the spirit and that the spirit and the body were two different entities that didn't necessarily work together and so they believed that you could be a Christian and you could serve God with your spirit and your body might do something altogether different but that was irrelevant does that sound familiar to any of you I went into the Franklin County Prison within the last year we go in every week but within the last year one of the prisoners was in a holding cell and couldn't come to Bible study and so he was sitting there along the alleyway when we went in or along the hallway and so when we went to go out he said I watched you brethren come in and I'm

watching you go out and you seem different from anybody else who comes into this prison do you preach a different message and I didn't want to say I preach a different message and the other people came in there so I could very easily say I never heard anybody else preach in this prison I do not know but if you are asking me if we preach a different message than what you would commonly hear as the gospel yes we preach a very different message and he said well in what way is it different I said we preach that Jesus is Lord and that everything he said and did is to be taken seriously and followed with the power of his Holy Spirit to make it real well he said isn't that what they all teach I said well do they Jesus said that lust is so serious you are to pluck out an eye or a hand and I don't

know what he literally meant there there wouldn't be any problem if he meant that literally but I said at least the language is very violent so Jesus is saying you must get victory over lust no matter what it takes and you know very well that most people call themselves Christians take off as many clothes as they possibly can at the summer and go to the beach they do I said Jesus said you are not to swear an oath who in the world takes that seriously well he admitted nobody does I said Jesus said that divorce and remarriage is wrong under any circumstance and you know what the churches have done with that I said Jesus said you are not to resist evil and nobody thinks it's wrong to go to war Jesus said you are not to accumulate wealth and we have people who call themselves Christians in

fact TV evangelists who are super Christians who ride around in Cadillacs and build \$500,000 houses and all of that and he said you know what you mean your whole church teaches and practices those things I said we try we are not perfect but we are we are pressing towards the mark well he said then your gospel is different they are modern day Gnostics they are enemies of the cross of Christ they say you can serve God with your heart and your spirit and what you do is somehow not connected that is just warmed over early church century histories Gnosticism that's what that is and Paul said there were many of these people this thing was starting in his day and he was trying to head it off they hadn't come to Philippi yet and neither had the Judaizers but Paul was warning these people and he

said mark them mark them and you need to mark them today you need to say well the testimony sounds impressive but there is something wrong there I had that person marked that is not the life of Jesus Christ that I am seeing I don't know what the testimony means but I am not seeing it and just be up front with yourself I am not saying you have to go get in the person's face and be nasty and rude I am not saying that this is conclusions you are forming for your own fellowship and how much interaction and what kind of interaction you are going to have with people you mark them who are the enemies of the cross of Christ our citizenship is in heaven heaven is our mother country and we are wanting heaven and we are allowing heaven to establish a little colony here on earth a different kingdom

by the way everybody wants to go to heaven I told you the other day I am not so sure that the New Testament talks a lot about us going to heaven the idea well in fact when you had a colony the people in Philippi didn't say oh we are just living to go to Rome no they would say we want Rome to be here we want this to be a model of Rome and all of Rome is behind us if we need any help Rome will come and take over and come to our aid well you know that is the picture we are a little bit just give me a minute here and I will be finished would you turn to Revelation chapter 21 maybe we will go to heaven I am not sure where we will be we will be with the Lord that is all I care but it is interesting how this is pictured I did just do a real quick check of the terminology of heaven or the word

heaven and I really don't see much picture of us going it is a little vague how it is all going to be but I do know this look what it says and I saw a new heaven and a new earth for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away and there was no more sea and I saw John John saw the holy city the new Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven prepared as a bride adored for her husband so it came down the new Jerusalem and we are going to be there and I heard a great voice out of heaven saying behold it doesn't say men are with God it says the tabernacle of God is with men and so here we are with this little colony of heaven on earth and we are looking forward to that kingdom coming down taking over the whole world and this little colony is a little picture to the rest of the world

until then what that is going to be like and we should be living in a way that people want to be colonists in this colony and we are going to have to take seriously all the things we talked about prior to this day and everything we said today it is King Jesus it is fellowship it is an army marching in lock step at the command of Christ maintaining the ground that they gain and not losing it like most churches start up here but we keep going and we keep gaining ground and this kingdom becomes clear and clear and finally someday that the mother country comes to the colony and takes over and the whole world becomes the colony it is great and I want you all to be part of it shall we bow our heads for prayer Father I thank you for this beautiful day I thank you for these dear young people Lord

it has been such a blessing to see the response to this reality that we are talking about oh God I pray that they would carry this back to wherever they live and we would be such a shining example of what we are talking about here about this colony and how they relate to people and their passion to pursue Christ and the standard that he represents and the supernatural work that he wants to put into their experience oh Father I just pray that these young people would be life changing examples wherever they go in Jesus name we pray Amen Thank you

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