

How We Grow in Our Love of God

by Paul Washer

The sermon emphasizes the importance of surrendering to God's will and recognizing dependence on His grace in order to grow in love for God.

Duration: 1:14:53

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Romans 3:23, Romans 12:1-2

Topics: "Love Of God"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes that all humans have sinned and are condemned by a holy God. He explains that no one can save themselves through their own works and that we are all helpless in our sinful state. The preacher then discusses the importance of loving God more and refers to Romans 12:1-2 as a foundational passage for learning to love God. He concludes by highlighting the role of the preacher in presenting greater revelations of God's glory to draw out the affections of the congregation and encourage them to seek Him.

Transcript

It is such a great privilege for me to be here with you tonight. And I've already been so encouraged by the people with whom I've spoken, not just from their words, but from the sense of the presence of God on their life. And it's like water to a barren soul.

And before I get started, that is something that I would like to mention. You know, so many times we look at people, maybe who preach and teach, people that maybe God has used them a bit, and we see them on a higher plane. We think that maybe God used them because they did this, or they didn't do that, or somehow they're more devoted and more dedicated.

We want to be like them. But you see, when we believe something like that, we're betraying everything that the scriptures teach us. Now, it is true, I want to be a godly man.

I want to be a sincere man. I want to be without hypocrisy. But the Lord oftentimes uses the runt of the litter.

Doesn't use the man with the greatest intellect or the greatest moral fortitude. Doesn't use the man that's bold and without fear. I have a friend who works in possibly one of the most dangerous places in the world for a Christian.

Where Christians are slaughtered and he is called to go into that. And he has shared with me countless times how literally when he gets on the plane, he has to do everything in his power not to throw up. He's so nauseated, he's afraid of his own shadow.

All he wants to do is run. He's not bold, he's not strong. But don't you see, God will often take the weakest man, the weakest woman, the one full of fear.

Full of doubt, even stumbling and use them. So that the glory belongs to him. Now, I'm not talking about a license for sin.

I'm not talking about God using people who are not cautious or God using people who are nonchalant. But there are no great men of God. There are only faithless, weak men of a great and a merciful God.

And that's all there'll ever be. It is his story. It's not ours.

Now, a lot of you who are younger, if I were to say to you, Jesus is everything. Jesus is absolutely everything. You would say, amen.

You would say, hallelujah. You would say, praise the Lord. You would say, that is right.

And I would assure you that you don't know what you're talking about. As you grow older, something happens. You see more and more of his holiness and righteousness.

And you see more and more of your sin. Oh, when I was converted 30 years ago or more, I was so much holier than I am now. I was so right.

Boy, I mean, God and I, we were going to do something. And as the years went by, you know, we hear that when God saves a man, he gives him life. And that's true.

But there's another sense also in which God saves a man or a woman. He begins to work death in them. When we first come to know Christ, we are so protected by grace.

We are so guarded over by God that we sometimes think the Christian life is, well, I got this down. But then what God does in his mercy is he pulls back. And what happens? Little by little, we begin to see the truth, understand the truth that we said from the beginning that everything is Christ.

It's all about Christ. If we took the sum of all our righteousness, it would only condemn us. If we took the best moment of our life, each one of us and we put it all together and handed it to God, it wouldn't be a worthy gift.

You know, many of you probably know about heart cry and how we sought to follow in many ways the ministry of George Mueller, of not making our needs known, not asking for money and all these things. And if you've read any of our journals or anything like that, you understand that there have been miraculous deliverances by God. And he has so many times in one day provided everything we need needed and just so many countless stories of God rescuing us to be able to support the missionaries.

And no missionary ever missed their support on the field and all these different things. And sometimes I want you to know something about that. Sometimes people have told me, Brother Paul, you know, your faith, your faith.

You know, every time since we began, I hate to say this, but every time since we began, whenever it looked dark. Like the finances weren't going to come in or something was going to happen, I would go home and I would get out of the truck. And after a while, my wife got to the point where she'd kind of meet me at the door and she'd say, yes, Paul, I know this time we're really going down this time.

We're really not going to make it. I can't I would have to say and I want to say that in my weakness, God might be magnified, that in every instance I have failed. I have doubted.

I take the step, but with unbelievable amount of fear, which with which I with which I wish I did not have, but every time. Every time he has prevailed. Every time he has prevailed, not because of some gift of faith.

But in spite of doubt, he is really writing his story, and I know some people don't like that, even some people who identify themselves with Christianity, they don't like that. I have sometimes shared with people my doubts and my fears, and they've become angry with me because they wanted me to be more. But isn't it encouragement? That it's not about our great abilities or our power.

Even our righteousness or our devotion, even though all those things are important. If one moment of your day was dependent upon the quality and quantity of your devotion. You would be crushed, but to know that he is faithful.

And that he has ordained to call out a people and to love them with an everlasting love and to bring them home and to use them in the process, in the journey. That is a great encouragement. A great encouragement to me.

It really is all of Christ. All of Christ. And he will be faithful until the end.

And when I look out at some of you, especially those of you who are younger and I ask myself and wonder, do you know the Lord, do they know the Lord? The great pain in my heart is that you would somehow make your way through this entire life and you would not know, you would not know this kind of love. That some of you have maybe heard about this kind of love from your preacher or your father or your mother or your spouse, but you do not know this kind of love. What a terrible, terrible travesty to be so close.

To be so strongly invited to participate, to be a recipient of the love of God and to walk away from such an invitation. A love that goes beyond anything for the preacher to name or describe, preaching is pitiful. You'll probably see that tonight, good demonstration of that.

Preaching is pitiful and in a sense, preaching always results in failure if Christ is the theme. Spurgeon said it in almost every sermon, he said, if I have the tongue of an archangel, I could not begin to describe to you the love Of God. The greatest pain, burden of the preacher is what? That he does not know God's love as God's love truly is, but even the love that he does know.

He can't communicate. And that is why preaching is so desperately dependent upon the Holy Spirit of God. Do you realize that not just me, but I could sit down right now and saints all over this room could stand up and testify? Every true saint would testify.

Of the love of God and then bow their head and say, I have failed him in this testimony, I have failed him. The love of God, and that's what I would want you to know more than anything. If you are a hardened sinner and you've set your heart against God and his Christ, I wish you could know the love of God.

I wish you would know the love of God, because if you do not, it is not his fault. It is yours. And if you're truly converted, if you're truly a Christian, then I know something.

Your greatest need, your greatest, greatest need. Is to grow in your knowledge of the love of God. And the more you know his love, the more you will be transformed by it.

At least I can say this, the more you will be humbled by it and brought to contrition and brought to utter dependence upon him. I am convinced that there are people who walk in a very, very clean type of life that aren't as pleasing at times to God as those who walk with a more stumbling step. If the one who walks clean walks independently, if the one who walks clean walks in a self-righteousness, if the one who walks clean sees very little need of the strength of Christ, one of the greatest ways in which we magnify God.

Is through recognizing our utter and total dependence upon his grace. And then being transformed by that grace. Now, I want to go tonight to the book of Romans and I want to show you a few things.

What would you do? I want to go to Romans 12. What would you do if I grabbed you by the shirt collar like this and I looked you right in the eye and said, you need to love God more? What would you say? Would you be able to say, no, no, I'm all right. What would you say if I looked at you and said, look, you need to love God more.

You need to love God more than you do. Would you have an argument to come against me? Could you contradict what I'm saying? Most of you would simply go like this and say, you're right, you're right. And most of you walk around with that, knowing that burden, that type of ball and chain that I do not love God as I ought to love God.

But now when a preacher comes to you and says, you need to love God more. One way you can really ruin his sermon. Is to say, OK, I'm in full agreement, how do I do that? How I remember one time I was a brand new Christian and a man got up for about an hour and a half and just let us have it telling us we needed to walk in the spirit.

We needed to walk by the spirit. We need to walk in the spirit, walk by the spirit over and over and over again. He kept saying it and I was like, yes.

And then after the sermon, I had the foolish immaturity to walk up to him and said, I agree with everything you say. What does that mean? What does that mean and how do I do? He became angry and I became convinced that, well, first of all, I was convinced I didn't know what he was talking about, but afterwards I was convinced he did not know what he was talking about. You see, you can ruin a lot of good sermons by just saying, OK, how? So when I tell you you need to love God more.

You need to ask me, well, how do I do that? Let's go to Romans 12 and look in verse one. Therefore, I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable.

And perfect. What a passage. It's foundational, I believe, to us learning to love God more now, first of all, let's look at an absurdity, let's start off there because, well, we after we look at that, we've just got nowhere to go but up.

Let's say that I'm laying on the floor on my back. And you see me there, you walk over kind of interested, why am I laying on the floor on my back and you see that I've got both hands firmly fixed on my belt like this and I'm going, I'm pulling with all my might. Straining my face is red and I and you look at me and you go, brother, Paul, what are you doing? And I go, well, I'm picking myself up.

And you say, brother, Paul, did you ever take physics in high school or college? The idea of maybe the need of an external force moving upon you. That you simply doing this, you're not going to be able to pick yourself up, and that is the way a lot of people are with the love of God, they hear that they ought to love God more, and so they, as the English would say, they kind of screw themselves up. They wind themselves up, they make vows and they they they dedicate themselves at least for a few moments to really trying to do this kind of like the football mentality in the locker room going to do this.

I got to do this. I got to love God more. And what is the result of that? Pulling at your own bootstraps, isn't it, trying to get yourself up, pulling at your own belt? Eventually, just wear yourself out, you just wear yourself out.

Well, there is that there is a biblical way to grow in the love of God, verse one of chapter 12. Therefore, I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God. Now, Paul says, I urge you, brethren.

I urge you, I plead with you, I exhort you. I beg you now, if you're here tonight and you're not a Christian, don't think that I am neutral about your particular state. Or that I'm saying, well, you go your way, I'll go mine.

No, I beg you, I urge you not to stay in the dangerous state in which you're in. But brother Paul, I've got excuses for where I am and they don't matter because none of those excuses apply to Christ. You cannot look to Christ and find one flaw to give you a good argument as to why you do not run to him tonight.

And that's why I'm not going to preach to you whether you are a sinner or a saint and just say, here's the truth. Now, do with it what you will. No, I urge you.

That's what all preachers do. They urge, they beg. Why? Because this is not about your best life now.

This is about eternity. This is about all the weightiest matters of sages and philosophers. This is about heaven, hell, life, death.

Eternal loss, eternal gain, that's what it's about. If you're not a Christian, this is urging, pleading that you not stay in your dangerous predicament and do not pride yourself in having reasons for where you are. You have none.

If you think you do, they will all be crushed on the day of judgment when you see how foolish and arrogant you've been not to come to Christ. You can make all kinds of excuses not to come to a preacher, not to come to a church, not to come to this, not to come to that. But Christ has never harmed you.

Christ has never been anything but good to you. And so I urge you run to him, run to him. And that's the way Paul is speaking to these people here.

He says, I urge you now in this particular case, look, he is speaking to brethren, brothers. There's a lot to learn from this, isn't there? Sometimes, yes, you can be. Almost intolerable in judging others, you can be intolerable and meddling in other people's lives.

You can be intolerable and thinking that you've discerned what another Christian needs when in fact you don't have a clue about it. Yes, all that is true at the same time. We need to be very careful that we are not nonchalant about our brothers and sisters in Christ, that we are not just saying, well, I'm going this way.

They're going that way. No, we need to be so concerned. That we urge.

That we plead, that we encourage, yes, but that also we warn that we do everything that Christian fellowship is supposed to be so that all of us grow to the image of Christ. And that's what Paul's doing here, he's saying, I urge you, brethren, the most loving thing. That Paul could do for these people is not allow them to stay where they were.

The most loving thing that a pastor or a preacher can do for the people under his care is to plead with them not to remain where they are, but to go on. To go on. I love it in the mountains of Peru, a lot of times, if you met a brother, a fellow evangelical, a fellow Christian in the mountains of Peru.

And you said you met them on a path and you said, hermano, como estas, brother, how are you doing? They would say, avanzando hermano, avanzando, advancing, advancing. Isn't that a good thing? Always advancing, because see, in the Christian life, you're either plowing uphill or you're rolling downhill. Advancing, advancing, and Paul wants them to advance.

Now, let's go on, he says, I urge you, brethren, what is he urging them to do? Let's skip to the middle of the verse and he's offering, he's asking them, begging them to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice. Now we're going to get into that a little bit more later on. But what I want you to see right now is simply this.

He's asking them to give everything to present themselves wholly to God, completely to God. Do you see that? So he's asking of them the most precious thing that they can give. I mean, even if you gave a car or a home, hopefully you would not see that as the most precious thing that you could give your life.

He is pleading with them to devote themselves to God. To lose their life, let's use gospel language here, the words of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, to lose their life that they might gain it, to say no to the world. And yes, to the will of God, the person of God, that's what he's asking them to do, to give the greatest thing they can give.

Now, what could be the motivation for that, what could be the motivation for you handing over to God? That thing which is most precious to you, your life, and when I mean life, I'm not just speaking about your existence or your breath or the thing that makes you animate, animated. What I'm talking about is surrendering the direction of your life to the will of God. Not just some romantic, emotional poetry here, but the hardcore reality of you and I surrendering our will to his will, surrendering our dreams to his will, surrendering what we think is wisdom, everything over to him, that's what we're talking about.

Now, what could be the motivation for that? Well, we have it here in verse one, therefore. I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God. So what is the motivation for you surrendering your life, your will? What is the motivation for you to do that, to surrender it to God? The answer is the mercies of God.

That's the motivation. Well, now you say to yourself, well, what are those, what are the mercies of God? Do you see that first word, at least in the new American standard, therefore, that is the key to understanding what the mercies of God are. When you see something like, therefore, a preposition like that, what it's doing is connecting us to what has come before, to what precedes.

Now, what do we have in the first 11 chapters of the book of Romans? Paul lays out for us the mercies of God. And what are those first three chapters? All of us have sinned and fall short of the glory of God and lay under the just condemnation of a holy and righteous God. None of us, Romans four, can save himself through their own deeds, through their own works.

None of us, we are utterly and totally condemned and not only condemned. Romans five, we are helpless. Without strength, we can do nothing to correct ourselves, to correct our condemned place before God because of our evil deeds.

We cannot change our condemnation and we cannot change the power of sin in our life to bring about a better result than what we've already achieved. We are condemned and hopeless. The mercies of God.

Yet when we were helpless and hopeless, Christ died for sinners. Christ died for his enemies. And so in Romans four, we have salvation by faith.

In Romans five, we have the continuation of that, recognizing that that salvation by faith is only possible because of the great transaction in the person of Jesus Christ in that he was the last Adam. He took Adam's place. He lived the life, Adam, and we could not live.

And then he went to the tree. Our sins were imputed to him. God considered him guilty and treated him as guilty.

God condemned his own son and crushed him under the full force of his judicial wrath. And in doing so, the justice of God was satisfied. The wrath of God was appeased.

And now we can be saved. Saved and not just saved as Spurgeon and the Puritans and others have said, would it not have been enough if he had just left us pardoned and alone and not in hell? Would that have not been infinite mercy? Yes, it would have. And let's go a step farther.

Would it not have been a glorious demonstration of love if he had pardoned us of our sins and made us like angels? Would that have not been infinite grace? But he didn't stop there. He adopted us and made us co-heirs with his son and decreed an immovable, immutable decree to make us like his son. And then we have the Christian life, which would sometimes bring some of these things into doubt.

And so we have Romans six and Romans seven and Romans eight. The talk about not only victory over the condemnation of sin, but also victory over the power of sin in this life to live a transformed life before God and before men. And then we have Romans nine, 10 and 11 that proves to us that the God who made all these promises is always has been and always will be faithful.

And therefore, we are secure. And Paul says now, in light of that, in light of that. Those mercies one time after the, as we say in the South, after the war of northern aggression, after the Civil War, it said that there was a union soldier who was very kind.

He was down in the South and he was he saw elderly woman from the South trying to make her way across the muddy street. And so he offered his hand to her. She gladly accepted and he walked her across the street.

And when she got to the other side, she said, thank you, young man, if there's a cool place in hell, I hope you find it. Now, once you think about this, but that is mercy. She is showing some mercy.

Listen, if God had given us a cooler place in hell, that would have been infinite mercy. Infinite mercy, but he didn't do that. He made us sons and daughters, my dear uncle, who I love so much, his favorite song in all the songs was I sing because I'm happy.

I sing because I'm free. His eye is on the sparrow and I know he watches me. He was known as one of the meanest men at one time on trial for murder, all sorts of things.

But when he was on trial. Years and years ago, a postman walked into his office who'd been delivering his mail for 10 years or so and said this, Mr. Washer, I've come here today because without a doubt you are the most evil, wicked man I have ever known. But there is a God and he sent his son to die for men like you.

My uncle was saved. If you ask my uncle sometimes, why are you happy, Jim? He'd go, I'm not in hell. I'm not in hell, I'm not in hell.

Just think if that's all it was, it would be enough to propel us to godliness, wouldn't it? To know you have escaped wrath, wouldn't that be enough to just shoot you into a new life? But that's not what he's done. He's not just saved us from, he saved us to to himself, to his glory, to the right of sonship, to be children, to be sons and daughters of the living God. This is the thing that's supposed to propel us, what God has done for us in Christ.

Now, I want us to think about some things in Romans 12. We see a change in the entire epistle, don't we? For the first 11 chapters, it's all really good theology of what God has done for us in Christ. And Paul marvels in it.

And then Paul turns around and looks at us and says, because of this, live this way because of what God has done for you in Christ. Now you do this. Paul does the same thing in the book of Ephesians, first three chapters of Ephesians.

It's the deepest theology, probably in the entire Bible. At least it reveals more of the providence and the secret counsel of God than probably any other chapters in the Bible, Ephesians one through three. And then when Paul finishes this magnificent account of God's salvation in Christ, he looks at the Ephesians and he says, therefore, live in a manner worthy of this calling based on this.

Now, let's talk about Paul as a captive for a moment. He was constantly saying he was a slave of Christ, a captive of Christ in chains, these chains. He had Roman chains on him at times, but I don't I think there was something deeper going on.

I think Paul was a prisoner, but not of Rome and not of wayward Judaism. He was a prisoner of the love of God. It's not that Paul loved God so much that he was imprisoned by that love.

No, but it's that Paul knew that God in Christ loved him so much that that love constrained him. If I were to live my life every day, my devotion was based upon my extraordinary love for Christ. My life would be like this because there's absolutely nothing extraordinary about my love for Christ, except that it may be extraordinarily weak.

Pitiful, when you think about the object of our affections and you think about how low our affections are, there's nothing to boast about when we talk about our love for Christ. As a matter of fact, many times when I used to hear the song, oh, how I love Jesus. I mean, it's a biblical song and you need to sing that.

Don't get me wrong, but sometimes I just can't help but just change the words. Oh, how Jesus loves me, because when I look at my love in the mirror, I see very little to sing about. But when I look at his love for me in God's word and not just the greatness of it, but that it is constant.

Do you see that it's constant? It's not like mine. It's not fickle. It's not two steps forward and three steps back is not hot and cold, it's not lukewarm, it cannot diminish because it would no longer be perfect.

It cannot increase because it is perfect, his love for us. And what's amazing is you enter into the kingdom of heaven and you enter into this love through the person of Christ, through his crucified and resurrected body. You enter into this love so that.

If you love Christ, if you're a Christian for 30 years. You are not more loved of Christ than the most recent convert. You see that the most recent convert is as loved by God as the most exquisite and famous saint that ever walked the planet.

Do you honestly think that God loved the apostle Paul more than you? He did not. Because Paul was only loved in Christ because of Christ. Do you see that? And so it is the love of God for us.

Revealed in the mercies of God through Christ toward us, that leads to us being. Changed. And not just legalistically changed, but changed with regard to our affections.

So that our affections drive us to follow a person and that person is Christ. Now, I want us to look at some things here. I love my wife.

I mean, I married far beyond myself, I can tell you that. She's from a city of 10 million people, and I'm a redneck from a city of a thousand. She knows where all the plates and forks and spoons are supposed to go on a table.

I feel proud if I'm even using a fork or spoon. She knows how people are supposed to dress. Obviously, I do not.

She can even read. Now, I love my wife, but I love my wife much more than I did when I first married her. And when I first married her, I mean, bam, I mean, I was really in love with my wife.

But I love her more now than I did then. Now, here's a good question. Why, why did I get better? Is that it? Well, then at her funeral, I can just talk about myself all day, can't I? Of how I grew to love her more and more.

Aren't I wonderful? Why do I love her more? Here's the reason I love her more, because after 22 years, I have seen more of her excellencies. I have seen more of her virtues. I have seen more of her character and more of her kindness to me.

And those virtues, those mercies, those kindnesses that she has shown to me. The person that she is, that she has revealed to me, what does that do? It draws out my affections. It is her quality, not mine, that makes me love her more.

It is her quality that draws out my affections, so I no longer have to screw myself up or read some book on how I'm supposed to love my wife or anything like that. Why? Because it's drawn out not by my great character, but by her virtue. You see that.

Now we're going to learn something about how we grow in our love for God, as wonderful as I think my wife is, she's she's not perfect like God. Don't tell her I said that because I'll get in a lot of trouble. No, she recognizes that she's nothing like God.

She has flaws. Sometimes she does want to hit me with a rolling pin and I haven't given her a good reason to do so. It's just because I walked in the kitchen at the wrong time.

But now, God, there is nothing I can examine. There's nothing I can see in him. There's nothing I can find that is not pristine, that is not infinitely beautiful, that is not infinitely glorious, infinitely worthy of some sort of devotion.

There is just nothing in him but perfection. Now, here's what I want you to see, especially if you're here today and you're not a Christian. I want to tell you something very dark about you.

Now, listen, men are born. With a radically depraved nature, why do they hate God? Because God is good. That's why they hate God.

You said, well, why would anybody hate a good God? Well, the only way someone would hate a good God is if they weren't good and they loved evil. It's only someone who loves evil that doesn't want to draw near to a good God. Jesus said something very similar in John three when he said they won't come to the light because they love the darkness.

You see that? Let me give you an example. Does a criminal in organized crime, does he love a just judge? Does he love a righteous judge? Absolutely not. He hates him.

Does he love a corrupt judge? Absolutely. You see. So why is it that we can preach all these things about God and some people are just because they love evil and it can also be reduced or twist around to say they just love themselves.

They love themselves. I remember one time speaking in Europe and it was a group of university students. It was at a university and they were very antagonistic.

And in one guy just gets up and he says, you know, religion, it just wants to put us in bondage. It's just your laws of Christianity. And all these things.

So I said, OK, all right. Which one? What do you mean, which law, which one? Is it the one that says don't lie? Is that the one that puts you in bondage? That you hate because it crimps your lifestyle, or is it the one that says don't take your neighbor's wife? Is that the one that puts you in bondage or is it the one that says don't have any other God but the real one, or is it the one that says don't covet what your neighbor has? And if those are the kind of laws that are putting you in bondage, that are crimping your lifestyle, I would like to have your name so that I could report you to the authorities because you're a very scary person. You see what I'm saying? Why do people hate God? Because they love their sin.

And for you young people, the guy went on and he said, well, there's nothing wrong. I said nothing wrong with what with what I do. Well, what do you do? I said, well, let me put it this way.

Are you going out tonight? Because it is Friday and we're going to end at like eight thirty. Going out tonight. Yeah.

Why, where are you going? I'm going to go party. Whose birthday is it? No, not a birthday party. OK, what is that? What are you going to do? Well, I'm going to get drunk.

Why do you need to do that? I mean, is there something so empty in you that you can't have a good time unless you're inebriated? And what about girls? And then him and his buddies. Yeah, yeah. I go, so you're going out tonight looking for a wife.

And they said, no. Well, then what are you looking for? Well, you know, girls. So you're going out tonight to hunt.

Another man's daughter. Make no commitment to her whatsoever and use her for your pleasure. Well, if she agrees to it, what about her father? Does he agree to it? Have you consulted him? How much will it hurt him if he finds this out? You're a monster and that's why you hate God.

Do you see how we can just cloak things so easily, don't we? We just cloak them all fun and games. No, it's not. Manifestations of a radically depraved, self-loving, God-hating heart.

And that is why when a preacher stands up and preaches the excellencies of God, his beauty, his holiness, his moral perfections, everything about him, you walk out with just anger in your heart. Because you don't like that. But if you're Christian here tonight, if you truly are Christian, I'm not talking about you just prayed a prayer, I'm not talking about you became a church member, I'm not talking about you turned over a new leaf and decided to live a new way.

I'm talking about you find Christ as everything, as your righteousness. As your life and you trust wholly in him. You dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus name, on Christ, the solid rock you stand, all other ground is sinking sand.

You love him. Well, let me tell you what's happened to you, if you're that way, it's because you've been born again. Now, the terminology born again has been literally destroyed by modern evangelicalism.

It simply means you made a decision at an evangelistic campaign. Now, born again, is this is another way of saying regeneration, you were dead in your sins, dead to God, and God made you alive. And when he made you alive, he made you a new creature.

He wrote his law upon your heart. He put his spirit in you dwelling in you. You became really a new creature.

If any man be in Christ, he's a new creature. Old things pass away. You that's not poetry.

That's real theology. You became different like Augustine. Remember, he's walking down the street before he was before he became a believer.

He frequented the houses of prostitution. He was a party guy and he's walking down the street after being converted and a prostitute leans out the window and says, Augustine, he doesn't pay any attention. And then she goes again, Augustine, he doesn't pay attention.

She goes, Augustine, it is I, it is I. And he says, yes, but it is not I. You see, became a new creature. Well, if you became a new creature, here's what happened to you. God gave you a new heart.

It's no longer a heart of stone that cannot respond to divine stimuli, but it is now a heart of flesh that when God touches it, it responds. And with that new heart, he gave you new affections. You no longer are drawn to the moral filth of this world.

You're no longer drawn to the moral filth of your own idolatry. But what happens? What really happens? Your affections are drawn out by him. So what happens? The more you see of God, the more you see of God, the more you know of God, the more your affections are drawn out and then your affections drive your will and you find yourself simply following Christ because you love him.

You see the difference? It's not because you read a book on five different ways to be more obedient. If I come home on Wednesday and my wife comes to the door and I grab her and give her a big hug and a big kiss and she says, wow, what was all that about? I go, well, I'm page thirty seven of the Good Husband manual. It says I'm supposed to do that.

She's going to feed that to me. I took a course while I was at Luke's. What? What? No, that's not good.

That's not good enough for her. She wants to know that affections have driven me to that. Do you see that affections have driven? Now, the question is, how do we kindle your affections? Your affections, first of all, can only be kindled if you have true affections because you've been born again.

Well, if you have been born again, then how do you kindle those affections by seeing more of him? That's why when you fly in an airplane and they have all those advertisements about all those beautiful, crystal clear, watery places and islands and sandy beaches, what do you do? You open it up, you look at it and what do you do? You go, I'm going there. I want to go there. Well, look at it.

You don't need any other reason, do you? I want to go there. What? Look at it. I mean, look at this thing.

It's better than Iowa and snow. Look at this, you see. Why you serve him, look, look at him.

Would you look at him? I want to I want to submit to you that if you see down through history, these certain saints that seem to be driven to unusual devotion, there's only one reason for it. It's not because of some caliber of their character. It's because they've seen more of him now.

I believe in expository preaching, even though I'm not very good at it, I believe in teaching the full counsel of God, history, law, prophets, epistles, gospel, apocalyptic literature, all of it. But my dear friend, if ever I get up and preach a text and the only thing you gather from it are principles and rules and laws, I've left you with maybe a lot of truth, but no power whatsoever to obey it. You know, let's face it, and I know some of them.

I know Christians in other lands, they don't have a one hundredth of the Bible knowledge that some of you have, and yet they walk in greater obedience than all of us and lay down their life. As martyrs, why? They've seen the beauty of him and it propels them to do what they know, you see, it's him, it's him. Now, here's something that I like to do, and I have to put it this way, I don't want it to seem so academic, but it's the best way I can put it.

I'll sometimes, you know, go up to guys, you know, they've got their master's or their Ph.D. and things like that, and it's all wonderful in theology or some guy just graduated from seminary and I'll go. When you are a new Christian, how many years did you spend studying the attributes of God? Now I say years, how many years did you spend studying who God is? And they go, well, I didn't I didn't do that. How many

sermons did you hear in your church about the attributes of God? Well, I mean, I don't know, I don't really recall.

Well, when you went to Bible college for four years, how many years of those four years did you study who God is, you know, his beauties, his excellencies, his attributes? Well, I had a systematic theology class for one semester and there we studied like I think it was like three weeks. Really? Well, when you went to your master's level, you're working on your master's, how many years did you study who is God? Well, my master's was in something else. It was in church planting or it was in ecclesiology or something like that.

OK, well, you got your Ph.D. Yes. In your Ph.D., how much time did you study the attributes of God? All right. You're a pastor now.

Yeah. How much time do you spend teaching the people, your people, who is God? Well, I hadn't thought about it that way. Think about this for a moment.

I mean, this is Christianity. It's about God, isn't it? It's about God. But look how little we know about God.

Or if we know something, we've reduced it down to something academic. That's very dangerous. Let me give an example.

The doctor knows more about my wife than I do. He knows how her hair grows, how her kidneys function. And he knows how her skin cells reproduce all that, doesn't he? He knows all about it.

But does he know my wife like I do? Absolutely not. So I'm not just talking about an academic knowledge, am I? Not at all. Not at all.

I'm talking about let's just summarize it all. I'm talking about beauty. Beauty, beauty.

When you see that beautiful beach with sand and clear water are those pristine mountains and that travel brochure, you're caught, aren't you? You just you just want to go there because of what you see, the beauty of what you see. And that's what the Christian life is. Greater and greater revelations of God in Christ that draw out our affections and drive us.

To him and following him. And I want to tell you something just by way of a personal testimony, I'm not really that religious religion really doesn't excite me that much. And even though the scriptures are full of laws and wisdom and principles, they don't keep me.

They don't. They do not. I'm sorry.

I'm sure a lot of you are a lot more religious than I am and a lot nicer and everything else. But those things aren't strong enough to hold me. As a matter of fact, there have been so many times, at least a few, when I have gotten so tired of what is known as Christianity, literally I wanted to get up and walk out the door.

You know what kept me from doing it? It wasn't a right way of life and it wasn't principles and it wasn't wise laws and it wasn't Proverbs and it wasn't even. Eternal destiny. It was Christ standing in the door.

The more you see of him, the more you will want him. So that's an admonition both to the preacher and the pew, isn't it? What is the primary job of the preacher to teach people life principles to live by? Well, there are principles and they're good and they need to be taught. Let's not go to an extreme.

But what's the principle thing is to lay before them greater and greater revelations of the glories of God and Christ. And in that. Their affections are drawn out.

And they will seek him. They will seek him. But now, Christian, I said that about the pastor.

Now let's look at something else. I went to a really small high school, I think 32 in my graduating class, and we weren't we weren't really academic standouts. We really weren't.

And I remember one time a teacher looked at all of us in our class and said, we need to have an art appreciation class. One guy in our class goes, what's that? And another guy goes, are you stupid? Are you really that's what is an art appreciation class? I'll tell you what it is. You walk into one of the museums, you look at that painting on the wall and you go, I appreciate that.

I mean, that's kind of what my that's my upbringing right there. It's probably some of yours, too, wasn't it? But you know what? My wife has taken me to museums. And she said, look at that, OK? It's a duck.

I like duck hunting. No, don't don't go down that road, Paul. Just look at it.

That's Monet's water lilies. Look at what he did. And then look over here.

I was reading about this character named Renoir that had to tie the paintbrushes to his hands. Because of the pain and when they asked him, why do you do it, he said, because the beauty is worth it. You read books like that and then eventually.

Plowboys start thinking, wow, I'd like to see that, I'd like to see a little bit more of that, and that's beautiful. I can see that now. You got any more stuff like that I can look at? You learn your palate changes.

One of the ways in which, you know, our society is going down the tubes is by the way it eats, it no longer cares about the quality of food, only the quantity of it. You see, but to actually taste the food and say this is a flavor I have never experienced before. It's a learning to appreciate the finer things.

Now, as long as you're constantly looking at the world as a believer, you will never refine your palate. It will always be crude and coarse, even though it won't sit well in your stomach. The more you renew your mind in the word of God, the more the things of this world seem crude and poorly cut, and the more the things of God in heaven seem glorious to you.

But at the same time, for all of you super spiritual people, something else also happens. You begin to see things God has made and experiences God has given us, and you see them now in the light of Christ and so that. Everything becomes holy, everything becomes spiritual.

So that. You can fast for a couple of weeks if God calls you to do that. But you can also sit down and eat a meal.

With such joy in your heart for the goodness of God, you can walk circumspectly through this world, but you can also dance a jig with your seven year old daughter through the kitchen until your wife gets a pan and chases both of you out. You begin to see everything. I love what C.S. Lewis said in it.

He said that he not only saw Christ, but saw everything now in the light of Christ. I love what Michael Card wrote one time. He said the Nazarene could hunger and the Nazarene could cry and he could laugh with all the fullness of his heart.

And those who hardly knew him and those who knew him well could see the contradiction from the start that we look around us, we look in the scriptures and we see Christ and we see the glories of God and it draws out our affections. We now see things in light of Christ. So we look at the world and we look at the children we're given and the wife we're given.

We even look at the tribulations. We look at other things and we begin to see everything in light of it and we see his hand and his goodness. And that motivates us to greater devotion.

My people are destroyed for a lack of knowledge and knowledge in the scripture is never merely intellectual. Paul said, I would not have you ignorant, brethren, about those who have fallen asleep. It teaches us that ignorance is a very dangerous thing in scripture and it hinders us.

One of our greatest hindrances today is they know not God. Wise men are not supposed to boast in their wisdom or strong men in their strength. A rich man in their wealth, but the one who boasts boasts in this, that he knows me, that he knows me in the book of Daniel, those who know their God.

Will be strong in that day of distress, they will do great things. Not because they're stronger than the average man or the average woman, not because they're more devoted because of some extreme quality of character. No, it is because they know God.

And in knowing God, it drives them. Why does that friend of mine get on a plane and go to one of those dangerous countries in the world where many, if not most of his closest friends have already been martyred? Why does he do it? It's not because he is a man of tremendous moral fortitude because he's seen that heavenly vision. He has seen something of Christ.

And that drives him. That drives him affection. I want your affections to be kindled, but your affections can only be kindled if you're truly converted.

I want your affections to be kindled, but it can only be kindled to the degree that you know something of the excellencies of God. I want your affections to be kindled, but that can only happen as a work of the Holy Spirit, not the best teacher in the world can kindle your affections. And I'm not saying emotions.

I'm saying affections that Christ might be beautiful to you, that he might be beautiful to me. A last word for those of you who have known something. Of a strong affection because of having seen Christ, I want to warn you, you cannot rely on past experience.

You cannot rely on past attitudes of the heart. You are always every day in danger. In danger of the flame in your heart dying down, of going backward and not appreciating for certain reasons, health and otherwise.

I was told that to be on a sabbatical for from July to December. And that wasn't God's plan because we bought a foreclosed on abandoned log cabin to live in with the heating. The heating is a wood stove on the main floor and spiders the size of small Volkswagen buses.

And so for five months I have worked. Well, 14 hours a day, literally fixing sewer smells and fighting tarantulas and everything else you can imagine, putting up sheetrock last night, I slept one hour putting up sheetrock. You know what? In those five months they were necessary, it was like a boiler turning up the flame.

But you know what? I let worrying about the kind of screws that go in sheetrock take the place of the lighting in Christ. I let the fact that the guy who promised to make that thing for me has been two weeks late and he hasn't even apologized. I let the fact that I had to go to Home Depot one day five times, I let that.

Do you see? Do you see? And you know, it's so refreshing and I can honestly say that this I came from last night just ready to just explode. I walked in here tonight. What happened? I saw other people who truly love Christ.

Now, I'm not being touchy feely, I'm not saying every one of you, but I saw some people who truly loved Christ and it like grabbed all of a sudden, pulled everything back into perspective. You see, I share with you these things so that you'll see that you're not an extraordinarily wicked person, that there are certain Christians who are so spiritual that never go through these things. OK, I want you to see that's not the case.

We can all go through these things. The smallest thing can change the rudder in our boat, and that's why we need the word. But not here's something that a friend of mine shared with me recently that is so good.

He says, I don't go into scripture. Primarily looking for principles. Or even guidance.

I go into the scriptures looking for him, looking for him. Now, let's not throw the other out, but the point that I want to make to you is that maybe you need to change some ways in which you're looking at scripture and teaching the scripture. It is to primarily to reveal him.

When you're with other believers and you see that maybe they're not, maybe they're off or maybe they're doing, you know, coming down and just crushing them with some command, it may not be the thing they need. Maybe they need someone who's glowing with Christ. That would make them envious.

Of such a passion. Do you see that? And so these are things that I want you to think about, I don't know what we'll do tomorrow, but these are things you need to love God more. OK, you don't have to be a prophet to know that you need to love God more, and so do I. How is that achieved by seeing more of his virtue, more of his beauty? How is that done through scripture, through prayer, through being around other believers who truly love Christ? Surround yourself with believers.

Who truly love Christ, who talk much about Christ, although they may love to talk theology, that's not their primary theme. But intimate conversations about Christ, which will not be void of theology, but theology is not the king of the conversation. Christ is.

Christ, Christ. If you're here tonight and you do not know Christ, then I plead with you, run to him, I plead with you, run to him. And there are those of us here, not just myself, but others who would be willing to talk to you, labor with you.

About knowing him, about having all sin pardoned, about being reconciled with God and know this, my dear friend, if you walk out of here without Christ, do not blame it on the sovereignty of God. Do not find comfort in the word predestination. If you walk out here tonight without Christ, it is nobody's fault but your own.

He calls all men to repentance and faith. And the only reason you cannot come is because you will not come, come, come, come to Christ, come to Christ, come to Christ. Let's pray.

Father, thank you for your word. Thank you for your good spirit, Lord, I pray that you would use your word to help your people. Lord, use your word in the heart of all those who may not know you, they may know you.

Lord, God, that they would see you as you are, that any lie, false description of you, any false religion that blinds their minds to the true beauty of your son, Lord, that you alone might destroy. Hold that thought captive, destroy it. And reveal your son to them in Jesus name, amen.

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