

# Informal Talk

by Paul Washer

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*The key to a life of joy and celebration is knowing God and His love, experiencing God and beholding His beauty and majesty, and seeking to be conformed to the image of Christ.*

**Duration:** 1:47:42

**Scripture:** Exodus 34:5-7, Micah 7:18, Romans 4:7

**Topics:** "Talk"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares a powerful illustration about a coach and a young man at the beach. The coach holds the young man underwater until he is desperate for air, and then tells him that when he wants to succeed in pro-ball as much as he wanted to breathe, he will become a pro-ball player. The speaker uses this story to emphasize the importance of belief and desire in achieving our goals. He also discusses the need to order our lives and prioritize our time in order to focus on God and His Word. The speaker encourages consistency and discipline in seeking God daily and applying His teachings to our lives.

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## Transcript

...that I want to share, but I want to point out a few things, and then later on if there's any grounds for discussion or things like that. There's just several things that are on my heart. One thing is, this morning, as I was reading through Psalms 47, and we'll just turn there for a second, in Psalms 47, it is, you know, as all the psalms, it's amazing, the psalms are so spiritual and so full of food and so full of strength.

It says in verse 1, O clap your hands, all people, shout to God with the voice of joy, which could also be translated with the voice of celebration, with a striking voice, that we ought to be a people who celebrate. We should, in our hearts, have a constant celebration, even in the midst of trials, over the goodness of God. My life, in some ways, as I've grown older, I've seen how wrong that I have been, fundamentally wrong.

In my life and in my ministry, I have fought a lot of battles, and I've carried a lot of burdens. But, there's a great problem. It's like the Lord opened up my eyes and showed me my face, which is not really a pretty thing to behold.

But, all I saw in my face was burdens, and I realized that what most people see, even family, friends, they can admire dedication, they can admire standing for the truth, but after a while, it just gets tiresome being

around a person who is constantly burdened, and carrying those burdens without Christ, and without His strength. But, even though in this world we're going to have struggles, and in this world we should carry burdens, burdens for the lost, burdens for the state of the church, we should be a people who celebrate. Now, how does that happen? How can we be serious about our Christian faith? How can we be serious about the great needs of the church and the world? How can we carry burdens, and yet at the same time, have a heart and mind of celebration and radiant faces? Only by beholding Christ.

Only by beholding His strength. It goes back to the beholder God, doesn't it? I want to tell you something. You can become so fixed on the battle, and so fixed on the problem, that your face is no longer fixed upon Christ.

And that is dangerous. Because dedication can take you a long way, but every step you become more tired, more burdened. And when people look at you, they may admire you, but they won't say, I wish I could be like them.

One of the things that so amazed me about the life of George Mueller, is that he, even though he was a frugal man, he never lived in luxury. He died basically with nothing, in a sense, materially. Yet, he always wore clothing that was clean and not tattered.

He was always careful to be joyful. He was always careful not to present a burden in his face. And someone asked him one time, why was this so? And he said, I would not want anyone to think that my master was unkind.

I want them to be able to see my face and realize that my master is kind. He's the kind of master that any reasonable person would want to have. Notice that one of the great marks of the fruit of the Spirit, immediately after love, most of us would think that the next thing that should come would be holiness, or something like that, or practical righteousness.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy. Joy, unspeakable and full of glory. And so we say this, oh clap your hands all people, shout to God with the voice of joy.

And in verse 2, for the Lord most high is to be feared, a great king over all the earth. He subdues people under us and the nations under our feet. Now I want you to look at two things.

Why should we celebrate? Why should we have joy? And why should that joy be manifested? You know, don't ever buy into the thing, you can't read my face. You don't know what's in my heart. Because what's in your heart is going to come out everywhere.

Why should we be a joyful, celebrating people? Verse 2, for the Lord most high is to be feared, the great king over the earth. Because of who He is. Because of who He is.

Even if we had no relationship with Him that was personal, we should still be a celebrant people in the fact that the one who made the world and governs it is a righteous and worthy God. Worthy of all praise, worthy of all honor, worthy of all glory. But then it says, a great king over the earth.

He subdues people under us and nations under our feet. We should not only be joyful and celebrating because of who He is, but also because of His works on behalf of His people. Because of what He has done that enables us to have such a relationship with Him.

He has fought for us and primarily He has done so through the cross of Calvary. He has fought against our sin. He has fought against everything that could separate us from Him and He has triumphed.

Then it goes on and He says this, and this is the point I really wanted to get to. He chooses our inheritance for us, the glory of Jacob whom He loves. Many times we become despondent, depressed, sad about our lives.

Or if not our lives, a certain part of our lives or a certain time in our lives or a certain struggle or certain things that we're going through. We lament that we are who we are or we lament that we are where we are. Or doing what we're doing or suffering what we're suffering.

But look carefully, He chooses our inheritance. Now I can apply this generally and I want you to look at this. He fought for us on Calvary and in His sovereignty He has chosen an inheritance for us.

And that's not just heaven, but that's every aspect of our life. He has chosen for us, He has marked out a way that He wants each of us to go. It's His doing, whatever we pass through, wherever we are in this earth and in this time, it is His choosing, His doing.

And then He says here, it says the glory of Jacob whom He loves. And this choice He has made for us, this inheritance that He has given us, it's our glory. And so to despise or be despondent or be depressed about where we are at this point in time or the providence of our God working in our life, it is to shun our glory.

It's to despise our inheritance. God has a perfect plan for John Snyder's life. He has a perfect plan for my life.

He has a perfect plan for your life. He knows what each one of us must go through in order to be conformed to the image of His Son. And He will conform us to the image of His Son and therefore we ought to rejoice in that, in His goodness.

And you can get off so quickly. And we see this when He's speaking to the churches in Asia Minor. Some of them were fighting the good fight.

But they had lost their first love. They were looking in the wrong direction. They were too focused on the problems and the things of the day.

They were not beholding God and Christ. And because of that, they could not live the Christian life that He had placed before them, that He had destined them to live. Now, I don't want to make this sharing time about me, but I've gone through in the last year some very crucial things in my life.

You reach stages in your life, young people, where you look back and you wish that things had been different. Or you look in the mirror and you wish that you had made more progress. And what I want to tell you is this.

Lay aside all the minor ambitions. Even minor ambitions of ministry. Even minor ambitions of changing the world.

And lay hold of the prize that is really yours. The main thing of the Christian life. And that is to know God, the knowledge of God.

But also to experience God, to behold God. To grow in the vision of His beauty and His majesty and His power. To grow in the vision of what He has done for you.

And to seek to be conformed to His image. Because the greatest way that the people of God can be used to transform this world is not politically. It's not even evangelistically.

It's through our transformation of being something that the nations would desire. Of being something that, in a sense, others would be envious of. I'm not talking about wealth.

I'm not talking about looks. I'm not talking about health. But I'm talking about joy and true life springing up in us.

Over the last years, I've preached many sermons. I've fought many battles. I've believed God for many things.

But in a sense, not in my devotion. Not in my dedication. But in my ability to reflect the life that He truly wants us to have.

In many ways, I've failed. I've failed. What I desire more than anything is that the life of God.

The life of Christ. The spirit of Christ. Be evident in my life in these things.

Love. To truly love. To look across the table at my wife.

To look across the table at my children. To look across the aisle at a stranger on an airplane. And that my heart genuinely be moved for them.

To feel compassion. There's a Greek word. It's very ugly.

Splachnos. The idea of my bowels. To the depths of me.

To really feel for that person. To love them. And to have joy.

Joy. I have discovered, man, this. It doesn't matter how joyful my wife is.

It doesn't matter how joyful my children are. The atmosphere of my home will be set by me. It will be set by me.

If there is joy in me, it will be contagious to those around me. To my children. To my wife.

To my co-workers. To everyone around me. It will be contagious.

It's an amazing way the Lord has designed this. That we should have such an impact on people. We may have to die for Christ.

But we're not to walk around as martyrs. There are times of mourning and blessing of the poor in spirit. But this is redefined in Christianity so that joy is not removed.

We should be the most joyful people on the planet. And that joy can only come by us knowing the love of God. And knowing what He's done for us in Christ.

And knowing that it is secure. And knowing that nothing can change it. And knowing that we stand before Him right now as righteous as we will ever be.

Because it's a perfect righteousness we have. And He loves us with a perfect love. And whether we are used to climb great mountains in Christianity.

Or whether we are to live our entire life without anyone even knowing our name. It doesn't matter. Our standing before God is secure.

His love for us is eternal. And that should fill us with such overwhelming joy. That even in the midst of the small battles that we may lose every day.

The war has been won. He has conquered. And we have been given a glorious inheritance.

An unchanging inheritance. Joy. Peace.

Knowing that the work of Christ is perfect in our lives. And that peace will bring patience. One time my wife asked me.

After being married for several years. She looked at me and she asked me this question. And what was amazing is a co-worker had asked me the same question a year before.

And this is what she asked me. She said, Paul, who's chasing you? And I said, what do you mean? She said, you're constantly running. Constantly trying to do more.

Constantly trying to do more for Him. But why? Why are you running and running and running? I'll tell you why I was running. Because I wanted Him to love me.

Do you see how wrong that is? Do you see how wrong that is? We have His love. And when we come to understand how much He loves us. And that that love is unconditional.

It's not based on us. It brings peace. It brings peace.

Where you know is you don't have to move a quarter of an inch to the left or the right to be more loved by God. You don't have to ascend up into heaven. You do not have to fall down into the abyss.

You do not have to climb great mountains. You simply are loved because of Him. It is settled.

And that brings peace. And then patience. Knowing how many times you have failed.

And yet His patience, His long suffering, endures and endures and endures. Enables us to live with a patience in our own life and towards others. And then simple kindness.

To be honest with you, I didn't have time for kindness. There were nations to be reached. There were lost people.

Don't talk to me about, I don't have time to go out and drink coffee with you. There are things to be done. If you want to talk to me about ministry, if you have any need, I will be there.

But to be your friend, I don't have time for that. I don't have time for kindness. Trivial matters.

We must go. We must work. We must do the mission.

We must reach the nations. No one should die in our lifetime without first hearing of Christ. You see how wrong that is.

But there's always time for kindness. There's always time for tenderness. Yes, it's a war, but you don't always have to act like a general.

Barking orders. Pushing. Making sure that the jobs are getting done.

There are times to just be kind. To just speak with people. To just commune with people.

Goodness. The idea of goodness, throughout the scripture, using different terms. It's not just a moral goodness.

There's a health. There's a solidity to the Christian life. There's a wholesomeness.

If your guts are being eaten up by the fact that the church is not as she should be, or the nations are still without Christ and haven't heard, then it's not a real reflection of the life of God. One of the most amazing, there's a picture of George Mueller when he's in his 90s, and he's sitting in a chair something like this, and his legs are kind of like this, and he's kind of looking this way. And you can see he's in his 90s.

But his face is glowing, and it almost looks like there's a child there. It's almost childlike. Even though he's 90, balding, gray, wrinkled, it almost seems like you're looking at a winsome little boy that is skipping down a lane.

Our lives should not be eaten apart. It should not be nervous. It should not be tense.

There should be a goodness, a soundness, a wholesomeness, and faithfulness. Not just, again, faithfulness in the big things. Like, will you go into that area and preach the gospel even though they're killing Christians? Yes.

You may be faithful to do really big things. That's amazing. That's impossible.

You may be willing to be faithful in the big things, but will you be faithful in the small things? Now, usually when that's said by a preacher, the idea is, well, he's faithful to preach, but he's not faithful to watch his finances. Well, that's true, but that's not the way I mean it. I think the idea that I would want to convey here is, it's not just faithfulness to the church at large, but faithfulness to individuals, to see the needs of your friends, your co-workers, maybe of someone weaker than you, and simply being faithful to be their friend.

And sometimes to do that means that you're going to have to miss opportunities to fight a battle, because you have a friend to whom you need to be faithful. And then gentleness. Gentleness.

I had a friend, I have a friend, he's a dear friend, and he is a godly man. Maybe some of you would even know his name if I were to mention him. And no, it's not Anthony.

He told me one day, he said, I always thought that I was a genius. One day, I was real upset about something. My wife didn't meet me at a certain time or place or something.

So I called home, and then she wasn't home, and she didn't answer. And so I left a message on the telephone voice box thing. And he said, and then when I played it, and I heard the way, there is a great need for gentleness.

For gentleness. You know, sometimes, you know, I'm not known probably for being the most gentle guy in the world. And I will tell you this, over the years, there have been many things that I have said that are true, and I said them the right way.

But I also want you to know that there were many things that I said were true, that there's a sense of being gentle, even in the midst, even in the midst of a raging battle, to being gentle. Another thing, self-control. Here's the thing that I want you to see, is that if you are a Christian, you are a new creature.

You are a new creature. And although all of us must pass through a lifetime of sanctification, you have a new relationship with sin now. You can overcome sin.

You can obey the scriptures. You can and will grow in Christ. You know, so many times, at least, again, I'm sharing from my own personal experience, in these last couple of years, you hear that the Christian life is a struggle.

But usually when we hear that, it's a struggle against sin. A struggle against sin. But, if you don't also see it, and maybe more so, as a struggle to believe the promises of God, you're going to be in trouble.

We have great and precious promises given to us with regard to our transformation. With regard to the life that we are now enabled to live. And we must grab a hold of those promises.

You look at things like what I've just quoted from Galatians, and you think, you know, love, joy, peace, patience, so on and so forth. You say, that's just so much not me, or it's not my character. We know that.

But it should be, it can be, and you need to believe God for it. You need to see this as the standard of your life. That your life should be a reflection of love.

To be honest with you, the last several, I can't tell you how long, most of my Bible study, most of my meditation, most of my prayer life, has just dealt with the fruit of the Spirit. I've preached in conferences all over the world. I've heard everything you can possibly hear.

It just, as I get older and older, so much of it to me is just rhetoric. What do I truly, I want to die being a man who bears the fruit of the Spirit. Who reflects this life of Jesus Christ.

And to be honest with you, I would trade everything else for that. You see, this is to behold Him, and to be changed by Him. Someone asked the other night after we were doing the Behold Your God thing.

They said, how do we know that it's not just all intellectual in our lives? And my answer was this. When we are truly growing in the knowledge of God, there will be transformation of relationship, and transformation of character. We should behold Him, to worship Him, to know Him.

And it is in that beholding, it is in that longing to see more and more of Him, that we are transformed to be like Him. To be like Him. I have seen over the last months, because I've had my doctors and everybody else kind of put me on forced sabbatical things, so that I don't die.

And it's given me time to look at certain things. And the most amazing thing that I've seen, is as I have drawn nearer to Christ, as I have concerned myself more with love, joy, peace, patience, I have seen, without saying a word to my family, I have seen a transformation in my wife. I'd say more than anything, a transformation of joy and hope.

I have seen a transformation in my children. And in that seeing the power of God. And so young people, the one thing that I would tell you, is that this life is something that we should desire.

That we should believe God for. That we should make at least a number of priorities, somewhere high on our list. It would not just be knowledge.

It would not just be so-called usefulness with our gifts. But our great need is the transformation of our lives. Now, that's not done by memorizing the fruit of the Spirit.

That'll help. But just by memorizing that and going over it every day isn't going to help you. What's going to help you is saturating yourself in the full counsel of God.

And seeking the full counsel with regard to who God is. And the full counsel with regard to the Christian life. See, so many times when there's a problem in our life, we look at a certain verse, we think if we memorize it, and we try to apply it more and more, it's going to fix us.

I have found that that rarely works. But I have found that if I will seek to know comprehensively what the Scriptures tell me about God, about everything, that all the areas of my life start conforming in light. Not to deal with one specific issue, but just seek to know Him.

To know what He is like. To saturate my life in the knowledge of that. To cry out to God for greater and greater measures of the knowledge of Him and the power of Him through the Holy Spirit.

The world, there's just so many words that the world has heard. There's so many sermons that the church has heard. And sermons are extremely important.

That's the means through which God is determined to proclaim. Not a life that's saying, how long is the scourge? Or should we only eat healthy food that's grown organically? Not what I'm talking about. Not a legalism that says, do this, don't do that.

But life springing forth that transforms us to love. Do you have joy? Would someone look at you and observe in your life, see a joyful person? If you say no, cry out to God. Cry out to Him.

Because this is something of our inheritance. Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such things, there is no law.

There is no law. Well, that was one thing that I wanted to share. I wanted also to take a look at something, just an unusual passage.

We'll go for a minute to Micah. Before we go to Micah, does anyone have any questions about what I just said? Any comments? In verse 18 of chapter 7, it says, Who is a God like you who pardons iniquity and passes over the rebellious act of the remnant of His people, of His possession? He does not retain His anger forever because He delights in unchanging love. This text presents a theological problem.

That theological problem is found throughout the scriptures. Look what it says. He pardons iniquity and He passes over the rebellious act of the remnant of His possession.

Do you see the theological problem? How can a righteous God simply pass over iniquity? How can a righteous God simply pardon? Now, maybe many of you have heard this before, but it's so important that I try to share it, especially to young people in their Christian life, to get a grasp of what is the heart of the

gospel. Here we see the fundamental issue in all of Christianity, and Christianity happens to be the only religion in the world that deals with this issue. If God is truly good, pass over iniquity.

Do you see that? If He's truly good, He cannot simply pardon. I was talking to a group of university students in Romania. It was a secular university, and they were there for, I think, to eat Christians that night.

They were all out in full force. So I'm back behind the curtain, and I'm asking myself, Lord, what do I do? Now, I know I've gone out there and preached the truth, but I'm not just wanting to preach the truth and go back to the hotel of martyr. I want to help these kids.

So I was praying, Lord, what do I do? What do I do? And I walked out on the platform, and this is what I said. I said, I'm going to share with you tonight the most terrifying truth, the most terrifying thing that the Bible teaches that will literally shake the thinking man down to the very foundations, terrify him to the point of death. Well, immediately, what did all of them think that I was going to talk about? Hell, or the second coming, or rocks and mountains falling upon the wicked.

But I said, all right, are you prepared? I am now going to share with you the most terrifying thing that the Bible teaches us. This is it. God is... Now, there was a snicker through the whole crowd.

They kind of started laughing, and finally, even one person voiced it. Well, what's the problem with that? And I said, yes, the problem with that is this. You're not good.

So what does a good God do with someone like you? You see, you'll hear preachers say, man has only one problem, it's sin. Well, it actually goes a lot deeper than that. It goes back to the character of God.

Because if God was like us, sin wouldn't be a problem. The great problem is not our sin as much as God's righteousness. That's the problem.

Because He is righteous, He cannot simply forgive sin. And that's something that you need to understand. I could give it to you in a common illustration, that a wicked man, a murderer, a thief, stood before a judge, and the judge simply pardoned him or covered his iniquity.

Would everyone in the world say, what a wonderful judge? Or would they say, what a corrupt and wicked judge. He ought to be impeached. So the great problem that we see in the gospel, in the scriptures, is not just that man is wicked.

The great problem is God is not wicked. God is righteous. So what does a righteous God do with someone like us? And this is a fundamental issue that's missed by all the other religions.

Look for a moment at modern-day Judaism, which is a far cry from the faith of the Old Testament. Look at modern-day Judaism. What is the basic tenet there? Do good.

But see, at the same time, they will all acknowledge that in their doing good, that they do not do perfect, that they sin. So what must they do? They must lower God's righteousness. They must lower God's standard.

They must make God something other than He is. You see, that's why it's so important. The Behold Your God series, studying the doctrine of God.

Do you realize that works, salvation, is not the result of a misunderstanding of salvation. That's where people get it so wrong. Well, they believe in works, salvation, because they misunderstand what the Bible teaches about salvation.

No, that's not the problem. They believe in a works, salvation, because they misunderstand who God is. God is righteous.

Adam and Eve sinned one time. The entire universe was cast into chaos. You sinned more times than you could count with a calculator.

Now, what is He going to do with you? You see the problem. If you look at the Muslim faith, it's the same thing. It is a lesser God.

Because it is a God who can be earned. A God who can be gained by works. A God whose standard is just a little higher than man's.

Because He doesn't require moral perfection. He only requires that you just try to do good. But the God of the Bible isn't that way.

He is perfectly righteous. All His works are righteous. And therefore, His demand upon us are righteous demands.

Perfection. Perfection. Now, let me just hold your place in Micah for a minute.

And go back to Exodus for a moment. Look in chapter 34. Verse 5. Now, look particularly at verse 7. And the seeming contradiction is there.

He forgives iniquity, transgression, and sin. He is not trying to lay out for us the three different types of sin. He is doing something very common in Hebrew literature.

He is piling one term upon another to tell us that God pardons all types and kinds of sin. All types and kinds of sin. And for that, we rejoice.

But in the same verse, look what else He says. Yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished. Do you see the problem? He forgives every sin.

He punishes every sin. Now, how do you do both things? How can this God who punishes every sin at the same time forgive every type and kind? Now, go for a minute to Psalms. Or let's just go to Romans where it's laid out for us very clearly.

Go to Romans 4. Verse 7. Or verse 6. Just as David also speaks of the blessing on the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works. Blessed are those whose lawless deeds have been forgiven and whose sins have been covered. Now, I want to ask you a question.

What do we say about a judge who covers sin? Sweeps it under the carpet. Hides it. Puts it away.

What do we say about a judge like that? Do we applaud him? Or do we condemn him? We condemn him. But look what it's saying about God. It says He covers sin.

He covers it. He hides it. He puts it as far from the criminal as the east is from the west.

Now, here's the great question. It goes back and forth throughout the entire Bible. And it's the heart of the Gospel.

How can this God be righteous and yet forgive unrighteous men? How can this God punish all types and kinds of sin and yet forgive all types and kinds of sin? He lets not one sin go by unpunished and yet He does not punish us. How can He do this? Let's go back to Micah. Who is a God like you? Verse 18.

Chapter 7. Who is a God like you who pardons iniquity and passes over the rebellious act of the remnant of His possession? He does not retain His anger forever because He delights in unchanging love. He will again have compassion on us. He will tread our iniquities underfoot.

Yes, He will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea. Now, you say, well, how can He cover our sin? Because He's treaded underfoot. How can He put away our sin? How can He forgive us? Because He's cast our sin into the sea.

I've heard so many songs and so many preachers talk about God rolling up our sin in a ball and throwing it into the sea. There's a problem with this. In my opinion, at least.

It needs to be interpreted Christologically. You see, do you think that God just took your sin and threw it on the ground and stomped it? Do you think that God just took your sin off of you, rolled it up in a ball and passed it into the sea? No. As the Puritans used to say, your sin had to be punished as it laid upon the same stock.

His man did sin. It's you that has sinned. A substitute must take your place.

A brother. One of your flesh and your bone. And so when it says here that God has tread our iniquities underfoot, what it means is this.

He took your iniquity, laid them on His Son and tread His Son under His foot. When it says that He rolled up our sin like a ball and cast it into the sea. No, He took our sin of us and laid it upon Christ and cast Christ into the sea of His wrath.

And that is the thing that brings the great reconciliation. You see, if you do not understand the character of God, you can't understand the gospel. Because the gospel is all about not the sin of man primarily, but the character of God.

How can God be just and yet justify the wicked? And it is only in the person of Jesus Christ. And when He casts your sin or He treads it or destroys it or whatever else He does, He punishes it. He does it in His Son.

And that's what makes our redemption so very, very special. Because it costs the life of one most precious. And you see, that's the thing that holds at least my heart to Christianity.

I'm not an extremely religious person. I'd rather be running like a wild man out in the woods hunting things. I'm not a very kept person.

I'm not a very orderly person. And to be honest with you, sometimes in all the battles and struggles, I literally, I think I would walk out the door. If it was just the church standing in the door or if it was just morality standing in the door, I think I would walk right past it and walk straight out the door and leave it all behind.

But the fact of the matter is, the one standing in the door is the one who died for me. It is the one upon whom my sins were placed and He was tread under the foot of God's wrath. The one upon whom my sins were placed and He was cast into the sea of God's wrath.

This amazing person, Jesus Christ. He's the reason, not only for living the Christian life, but staying. He's the reason for putting up with whatever you must put up with in this thing called Christendom.

He's the reason for not giving up and not giving in under external battles or the weight of your own failure. It is Jesus Christ. And you are not going to be strong in the faith unless you have this view of who He is and what He's done for you.

And the fact that your redemption lays upon Him. You know when I see this passage and it says, You will cast all their sins in the depths of the sea. I think a lot of times about Jonah.

And I think about Christ with His disciples. And the great storm comes up in the sea. It seems like it's going to be swallowing the boat down.

I want you to think about this. Jonah gets in a boat. Christ gets in a boat.

Isn't it amazing? Jonah goes down inside the boat and goes to sleep. And what was Jonah? A disobedient prophet. Right? A disobedient prophet.

Jesus goes down into the boat. While Jonah is there sleeping, a great storm arises because of his disobedience. Christ goes down in the boat and a great storm arises.

I wonder sometimes if in the heart of those disciples they weren't thinking. Maybe the Pharisees are right. Maybe this is a disobedient prophet.

Look, we're in the very situation those men were in with Jonah. Jonah got in that boat and the sea was about to swallow it up because of this disobedience. We're in the boat with him.

He's sleeping just like Jonah down there. And all of a sudden this storm comes up out of nowhere. And it's supernatural.

We can't even handle this thing. Jonah comes up out of the boat and he says, It's me. It's me.

Throw me in. And they throw Jonah into that sea. And the waves are still.

And the men are saved. Christ comes out and says, Be still. So he proved he's not the disobedient prophet but the Son of God.

But then he throws himself into the sea of God's wrath on our behalf. And the storm. And what's so amazing there, if you can get your mind around this one truth.

I've heard preachers say many times, older preachers, You will never be more right before God. And what they're simply saying. They're not saying that one day you will see sin in heaven because you will.

What they're saying is, Your position, your place before God is totally and entirely fixed. And you stand before Him righteous. Because of what Christ has done for you.

As eternal life does not begin in heaven but begins the moment you believe. So your righteousness and your relationship with God is fixed in that. And you must learn to walk in that.

It is the great war against depression, against the lies of the devil, against everything. To know that this God who is perfectly, completely, entirely righteous. And makes absolute righteous demands.

Puts them upon you. Those righteous demands have been totally and completely satisfied in the person of Christ. And so now you stand before Him.

Completely accepted in the beloved. And now you press on to know the Lord. You can lay everything behind you.

And just run the race. And when you fall. And when you stumble.

You can get right back up again. And you can keep going. Because God's, God's face toward you has not.

It was fixed in the person of Christ. What He did for you. Any questions? When I was a younger Christian and Clyde Cranford was talking to me about these same types of things.

I would always fear to believe what Clyde said. Because I thought the only way for me to move forward in holiness. Is that I still have to be a little bit afraid.

Not that I would lose my salvation. But the things that Paul has just said. The things that the scriptures say.

I just thought. If I really believed Him. It would produce such a self indulgent lazy Christianity.

Because I would think what? I can't be loved anymore than I am now. I can't be any more righteous than I am now. And it would produce this.

Kind of like a life without a leash. You know like a dog gets off it's leash and just runs and gets into trouble. So instead of thinking of it as the gate was open.

And I was allowed to walk out with Christ. I thought. Oh that's too dangerous to believe that.

So Paul. The question I get often. And the question I asked Clyde back then.

Was. How do we believe the things you say. How do we lay hold of them by faith.

And then not lead to a life of self indulgence. I think it goes back to knowledge of who God is. Knowledge of what God has done for us in Christ.

That's on the practical side. On the positional side I would say this. If you are truly Christian.

You have a regenerate heart. That regenerate heart will desire righteousness. It will desire being pleasing to God.

It will not only have a new relationship with God. But a new relationship with sin. Sin will not satisfy.

Sin will bring disdain. Sin will bring shame. You are a new creature.

And that new creature will want to live a certain way. And when it does live. Lackadaisically.

Or in spiritual laziness. It will not find joy. You see.

There is a sense in which. First of all. You have been made.

If you are a Christian. And your hearts been regenerated. You are a new creature.

But you are such a high creature now. You are such a high creature. That if you were given the entire world.

It would not satisfy you. And if the entire world were taken away from you. It wouldn't satisfy you.

Is God and the will of God. So that. The very nature of who you are.

Is going to direct you. Away from. This lackadaisical attitude.

This slothfulness. And it is going to drive you to God. Secondly.

Not only are you a new creature. But you have been adopted. And you have come under the care of your heavenly father.

His providence. We must be on guard against slothfulness. But don't think you are walking this walk by yourself.

My little seven year old girl. Must be on her guard. When she walks across the Walmart parking lot.

But know this. If she is not on her guard. I will be.

I will be. And if she is being too careless. About the way she is walking.

I will yank her arm. I will pull her back to me. So one of the great confidences we have.

Is not just that we are a new creature. But God has now intervened in our life. We are not our own anymore.

We belong to Him. He will see to it. Now that is on the positional side.

That is on the divine side of this work of salvation. On the other side. Is this thing of us growing.

In the knowledge. Of God. Now what I mean by that is.

Knowing. Who He is. And not just in an intellectual sense.

But the idea of what waits for us on the other side of the veil. You see. The other side of the veil.

Is a great motivation to those of us who live the Christian life. We are talking about one day opening our eyes. And seeing such a vision.

Of God. Such communion. Let me put it this way.

Have you ever walked out. And seen something beautiful. Like a sunset or something.

And you said it took my breath away. Have you ever done that? Alright. Now I want you to think.

It took my breath away. Well if it took your breath away hard enough and long enough. It would kill you wouldn't it? Alright.

If a sunset. In a fallen world. Can take your breath away.

The beauty of God. Is so great. That if you were to catch a glimpse of that beauty.

At this moment. Without your heart being strengthened supernaturally. It would drive you mad.

It would kill you. The sheer beauty. Of what waits for us.

Beyond the veil. In the face of God. So when I was talking about like the knowledge of God.

And the providence of God. And all these things. I need someone out to write a book just on this beauty.

I'm not talking about these intellectual concepts. I'm talking about one day. I'm going to close my eyes in this world.

And I'm going to open my eyes to a prize. That one glimpse of it is so glorious. It would kill me.

It would disintegrate my mind. And make me mad. That's what awaits me.

On the other side of the veil. And so it's such a motivation. It's such a chase to know it's coming.

It's coming. I have an ongoing joke with my boys. When I'm getting up in the morning.

And they're like. Dad. Man.

You're getting old. I say no. I'm getting close.

One day. Close. Soon.

I will close these eyes. And I will open them. To joy unspeakable.

And full of glory. You see. It's that.

It's this idea of beauty. See everything in the Christian life. Has become so stinking religious.

And so factual. Data. About God.

I'm not talking about. I'm talking about. Beholding this being.

Who is unsearchable. Unsearchable. What are you going to do? Let me put it this way.

It's very. It's very childish. Let me just put it in a way.

Maybe to the least. I can understand it. I die.

And I open my eyes. And I see the beauty. And glory.

And splendor of God. In such a way. That if I am not supernaturally strengthened.

It will polarize me. Such joy. That it would rip me to shreds.

And then I go to bed. First day in heaven. Next morning I wake up.

And I see. A vision of God. That so surpasses.

The vision of God I had the day before. That it would tear me to pieces. It would ravish me like a violent sea.

If he didn't hold me together. And every day throughout eternity. Experiencing greater and greater.

Visions of this magnificent God. That leads to rapture unspeakable. That's what awaits me.

So when I hear. That he's done all this for me. And it's complete.

It's this kind of hope. That continues to drive me on. You see that.

To drive the Christian on. And we haven't even begun to talk about the cross. You see when Paul said.

He was a prisoner in chains. He was talking literally about Roman chains. I think there was something even.

Far beyond that. It wasn't the chains of running. Because many times they were loose.

I mean they set him free at least once we know. Probably more times than that. And he could have.

He could have gone to Syria. He could have run. He could have turned his back on the whole deal.

And continued on with a really good. Leather making or tarp making business. Or whatever he really did according to this.

It was the crucified Lord. It was the resurrected Christ. To whom he was truly a prisoner.

He was a prisoner of Christ. And of his love. Notice it wasn't Paul's love for Christ that constrained him.

It was Christ's love for Paul that constrained him. So when a believer learns all about this freedom that he has. He's going to be alright.

Why? He's regenerated. He's a new creature. Who wants things this world cannot give him.

And when he does pretend the fool. And goes back to something and takes a bite out of the world. It will be like rot in his gut.

When he is slothful. He will not find the joy he once had. Then there's the providence of God.

That will make sure that he stays on track. Do you know what all the trials in your life are about? In my opinion trials are one thing. They're wind that blows us to God.

It's God constantly keeping us at his side. That's all it is. So God's providence will keep you on track.

But then on the human side. The more you know about God. And what he has done for you in Christ.

You're not going to have to worry about zeal. You're not going to have to worry about being slothful. You'll be a prisoner of hope.

A prisoner of Christ's love. And see look. And that's why.

Even though Christianity is a truth religion. And our morality can be defined in propositions. If all you're given is correct teaching.

On what you're supposed to do. And what you're not supposed to do. You're going to have a miserable life.

You need who he is. And what he's done. And that will move you.

Into the morality that is the Christian life. So that would be my answer. You don't have a clue do you? Because I don't either.

I mean what is waiting for you? What is waiting for you? You see you've been made a demonstration. Look in Ephesians just for a second. I'll show you something.

It says in chapter 1 verse 5. He predestined us to adoption as sons. Through Jesus Christ to himself according to the kind intention of his will. To the praise of the glory of his grace.

Which he freely bestowed on us in the beloved. Verse 9. He made known to us the mystery of his will. According to the kind intention which he purposed in him.

With a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of time. That is the summing up of all things in Christ. Things in the heavens and things on the earth.

Now go over for just a minute to chapter 3. Verse 10. So that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church. To the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.

You along with the people of God have been made a demonstration. You're a demonstration of who God is. To whatever else is out there.

Rulers and authorities. Powers and principalities. To whatever else is out there.

You have been made a demonstration. Now let me give it to you in a way that I share with my children at times. If you look at the fall of Satan.

We know so very little about it don't we? We know a lot less than what we teach actually. But he fell. Along with the non-elect angels who fell.

And what happened? Perfect justice happened. Perfect justice. Now let's look at man.

Man falls. What happens? What do you think of the moment that Adam fell? What do you think every heavenly creature being thought the moment he fell? Based upon what happened to Satan. What do you think? There was a rattling of the storms.

Perfect justice was going to fall. No hope. They have forfeited their opportunity.

There's nothing but judgment. God is righteous. Yes.

And then what do we have? We have the beginnings of the story of redemption. And all of heaven looks on with a gaping mouth. What is this? And we see throughout the history of redemption.

We see a nation. Basically, one man called a pagan and adopted and turned into a nation. And from him would come kings and nations and all sorts of things.

And principalities and powers are looking on. We see constant, each generation, forgiveness and mercy and grace, patience. And all of creation is looking on.

Then we see the Christ, the Son of God, come to earth and die for the sins of men. Manifold revelations of the mercy and grace of God. And then there's you, born in iniquity.

A child of the devil. An enemy of God. All of creation screaming out your death.

And God calls you. He cleanses you. He adopts you.

He works throughout your life with unending patience. With mercy. With grace.

Faithfulness. And then one day, He sets you in glory. Totally transformed.

A co-heir with His Son. And then throughout all eternity, He lavishes upon you greater and greater manifestations of His grace. So that all of creation can look and see the kindness of God to you.

And then realize who He is. You've been made this kind of a demonstration. This is what your future is all about.

God has chosen you to teach all of creation, throughout all of eternity, His attributes of grace, mercy, kindness. Imagine for a moment Bill Gates, who's had a lot of bad publicity. He decides, you know what, I'm going to do something to show people.

And so he comes to Mississippi. And he adopts you. And he gives you his entire fortune.

And he wants to prove to everyone in the world just how generous, how kind, how gracious he can be to a pitiful little redneck hillbilly like you. That'd be a pretty good thing, wouldn't it? Just think about this. In one sentence.

Not that God has anything to prove to anyone. But that He is the God of revelation. Has chosen to take not the noble, not the strong, not the wise.

But the weak, the ignoble, and the base things of this world. And make them co-heirs with His Son. And that this sonship lasts throughout all eternity.

With greater and greater revelations. With greater and greater spiritual riches being poured on your head throughout every day of eternity. So that all looking on will know how good and gracious God truly is.

Now with a vision like that. With a hope like that. How can you do anything but live for that final day? How can you do anything but have joy? How can you do anything but praise Him and serve Him and believe His promises? I think that for us we do have to remember.

What Paul has just done has demonstrated it. Not just explained it. That it will never be enough to move us forward one inch.

It will never make a difference to us. If we grab hold of a certain, like of a religious phrase. The love of God is what sanctifies us.

Something like that. It's a true phrase. When we don't enter in like Paul has done in his own life.

And know what he's done just now with us. If we don't enter in. And get into the scripture.

And meet God at each of these words. Until they. Then what Paul's talking about won't occur in us.

We just have an allegiance to a few phrases. A suffering people. Seem to be more privy to these.

As this world is nothing for us but a harbinger of suffering and pain. It turns our eyes away from suffering. It just means that we need to endanger living in a place during the war.

And while the war was going on and bombs were blowing up. And everything else. It was amazing.

The attitude of the church. It was all about we need you. It was also the relationship with God was built by His many, many deliverances of His people.

You would hear about. You know we would wait in line sometimes for two or three hours to get a bag of rice. And the Lord would provide something.

It was look this happened miraculously. He did this for me. Or a bomb went off on a certain street I was walking down.

But I just happened to be behind a car when it went off. So there was a situation in which it didn't matter how rich you were or what you had. You could not do it.

God had to do it for you. Which created a dependence. Which also created the opportunity to see God move in miraculous ways on behalf of His people.

But when we live in a culture like ours. That culture doesn't prosper these things we're talking about. One of the things as Christians that helps us to see God in a greater way in the experience of our life.

Is by living a life of faith. And again I don't want some young person running out doing something really stupid. The more we believe in God.

Of living in a certain way. That if God does not move on our behalf. We're in a greater way.

In that way. The more opportunity afforded us to see God. Let's give an example of George Miller.

In his life of faith. The more that he stepped out financially to help orphans. The more he risked everything.

The more he saw great deliverances. Only those who take great risks in the battle of the kingdom. See great deliverances.

As we go on through our life. And I've been walking with Christ now for 30 years. There is a sense in which older men and women have an advantage over the younger Christians.

We have something that only years can give us. We can look back. Every one of us in this room that have walked with Christ for 15, 20, 30 years.

We can look back. And we can see time after time. Without him.

No one can deny it. He intervened. So young Christian you have to take courage.

Encouragement in the fact that. As you get older. And you keep walking with him.

You will have a storehouse. Of greater and greater. That will lead you to a greater and greater life.

If you cry out for these things. He'll give you these things. It may not be in a year or two.

That his manifest glory. And that the glory of Calvary. Would be the driving force of your life.

He'll make it so. He'll make it that way. Any questions? I have a question.

I'm trying to think how to word it. Going back. Kind of the whole thing you've been talking about.

The fruits of the spirit. Love, joy, peace. When those things are not tangible in you.

There's your conscience and the enemy. And seem to be telling the complete opposite. How do you know the cross is for you? How do you know God loves you? You look outside of yourself to the best of your ability.

You say I'm not going to trust God. I'm going to look to Christ. And there is peace that comes.

How do you know. Distinguish between faith and. I guess I don't know.

Presumption is the right word. Or positive thinking. But how do you know that you really.

The peace that you're experiencing. Is really from looking to Christ. Or thinking.

Does that make sense? Well it depends really upon where the person is. That's asking that question. If it's a new believer struggling with it.

Or just struggling in this area of peace. That would be enough. Here's.

When everything is in confusion. Go back to the. Foundation.

And that foundation is this. I know. That Jesus Christ is my only hope.

Nothing in my hands I bring. To the cross of Calvary do I claim. I know that.

I know that is the reality. And that's where I always go back. And that's where I always start.

You know my assurance. Although Martyn Lloyd-Jones even spoke about. Different aspects of assurance.

Means of assurance. One was actually reason. We just reason.

We look at the fact. We look at certain texts. And we can honestly say in good conscience.

I believe that. I believe John 3.16. I believe that is for me. It's the sense of the experience.

That I do experience peace. There have been times when I would testify. That there was a supernatural peace.

Of trusting in Christ. But sometimes in the midst of confusion. It seems like those things collapse.

I know that a Christian can doubt their salvation. A true Christian can doubt their salvation. But a true Christian will never doubt.

That Christ is the only hope. Am I clinging to Christ? Am I barren of all despotism. Of all other hope.

And see Christ alone as my savior. And one of the things also. Remember he's not a hiding God.

Everyone needs to realize that. A person crying out to God. And a person reading God's scriptures.

He will be led. He will be taught. So in the midst of whatever confusion.

Maybe in this person you've mentioned. They would be in the word. Cry out to God for understanding.

They'll make their way. The vision will be cleared up. Justin I think that one thing that we see with the believer is.

That when the conscience cries out. And it's true things perhaps. And we.

Sin has perhaps led us into a place. Where God will not allow us to have that sweet assurance. The unbeliever.

The hypocrite. The merely religious person. Who's been trying to do better.

And be good enough. Will run. From God to something else.

At a time like that. They will run to. Okay God.

If you just give me another chance. I'll do better. I'll do this.

I'll give up this. I'll. So they run to something.

And the believer. Or they run and hide like Adam and Eve. Like I just don't even want God to see me right now.

Let me fix myself first. But ultimately the believer. As agonizing as it may be.

We drag ourselves right back up to the mercy seat. And say to him. I'm not even sure what I am.

I'm not even sure if I'm one of yours. But as Paul said. But I know.

I do know this. I know who you are. Even if I don't know who I am right now.

And that is the believer's path. But the unbeliever doesn't do that. They always run to something else.

Do you know sometimes. Have you ever caught an eel? An eel. I've never heard of that.

In case you're out in the Mississippi or Ohio. It's about the nastiest thing. You can never get on your line.

I mean you have to hit a big rug or something. And grab the thing. Because it's so slippery.

Sometimes that's about the way I see myself. And it's like. It's God's providence.

That has a hold on me. And I mean. I could be squirming all over the boat.

Just like that eel. Just throwing mud. Just squirming.

And just out of control. Confused and everything. There's always this reality.

That he's got a hold of me. And I can see that throughout the entire scripture. Can't we? We don't see Abraham as this.

You know. T crossing I dotting. Perfect person.

Constantly on the uphill road. Designed to do it. We see him denying.

You know. The faithfulness of God. In front of a little earthly king.

And telling a lie about his wife. We see all these things. But what do we see? In all that mess called Abraham.

We say too much about men. In all that mess. Of Abraham.

What do we see? We see God. In all that mess. Of the patriarchs.

In all that mess of Israel. In all that mess of David. What do we see? A hand.

That's got a hold. There are no great. Just tiny faithless men and women.

I have a question. Earlier you said something to the effect that. I think actually what you said was.

We behold God. To know him and worship him. But I think hopefully.

I'm not just speaking for myself here. I think I see a tendency in me. To start with.

The desire to be transformed. And then work back from that. My question is.

How do we avoid the tendency. To use beholding God. As a means to an end.

Even if it's a good end. Just when you see you're doing it. Stop it.

I mean really. It is. My wife said something the other day.

I'm not saying because John was here. But we're doing the behold your God. She came back.

I had to stay. Someone had come to my house. I couldn't get there on Wednesday.

My wife came back and she was just. She was really shook up. I could tell when she was shook up.

I just saw something tonight I've never seen. I read a passage and I'm always thinking. How does it apply to me? How does it apply to me? She said I heard tonight in the study.

When John was talking. In the film that he was asking himself. What does this passage teach me about God? I don't know how to say.

I don't want to talk. I don't want to use the word. I'm not a Christian.

Even is. I think the scriptures lay it out. You know.

I don't think about transformation. In that sense. I want to be transformed.

I want to be transformed. I think about a man. Found a treasure in the field.

Sells all he has. By the field. Taste and see that the Lord's good.

And I know by faith, and some because I'm older, by experience, that the Lord is beautiful, that the Lord is excellent, most excellent, that the Lord at His right hand is joy. So it's, I just want to be, that's the goal. It's not I want to know more about you so I can preach better.

It's like, almost like an explorer, it's like someone out to discover, someone to see this magnificent thing. You remember Moses, I'm going to turn away and see this thing, this burnt bush, I want to see it. He wasn't talking about I want to be transformed, you know, I want to be burned, I want to be used.

He says no, there's a, I want to find out what this is, I want to turn aside and see this thing. What is this? And that's the way it is with the Lord. He's the most wonderful discovery.

He's the most beautiful thing. You know, I heard a guy, I've looked a lot at, and don't laugh, but I've looked a lot at two things in the last couple years, just as kind of fun, and that is UFOs and Bigfoots. Okay? Now, you ask why? And I'll tell you, you want to know what sparked it? Apologetics.

Because I started looking at evidentialist apologetics, and I applied it to Bigfoot and UFOs, and found out I could prove Bigfoot and UFOs with a lot of the apologetics that Christian apologists were using. You know, honestly. And, but I came across a man who was really involved in the UFO thing, and he became converted.

And he said, I mean, he was like Area 51, he'd go out and do all this stuff and everything, but he was converted. And he said, the reason why this whole thing, the UFO thing, the Bigfoot thing, all these types of things are so attractive is because, first of all, our lives are so mundane. They're so not.

It's the reason why Supergirl movies are so popular. Alright? We want something more than what we have, what we are, what we see, what we touch, our physical present reality. We want so much more than that.

And also, I believe it's something that God's instilled in our own heart. Especially, not only as Christians, but as human beings, that we're not content with what this is. The seeking after God is the answer.

He is the great discovery. He is that thing out there that fulfills, that excites, that fills our life with wonder. And that's why I go to God in prayer.

That's why I look in His Word. It's because of the beauty, the joy, the otherworldliness, that thing that's out there that gnaws at you that you must have. He's in.

He's that thing. He's that person. He's what you were made for.

You find everything in Him. That's why you go to Him. But in that, there's a residual consequence.

There's another thing that happens. You are transformed. You are changed.

And that change manifests itself not so much in a patterned morality, as it does in an increasing desire to know Him. I have known men that were not... How can I put it? I have known men that chased after God

madly. They weren't the cleanest bulls in the pen.

They weren't necessarily the guys who got everything right, dotted every I, crossed every T, or even knew everything right, or did everything right. They were these men who just... They had caught something of who God was, and they chased after Him, and they wanted Him. Do you see that? He's that pearl of great price that you've got to have, once you've tasted and seen that the Lord is good.

And even now, though, in my older age, there are times when I can stray, when I can fix my eyes on something else. But God is always faithful to do what? To blow me back, pull me back, kick me back, drag me back to looking where I ought to be looking. Listen, I don't want to be like really just a simpleton here, but don't... You young Christians, don't get frantic about your Christian life.

Don't get frantic. It's God's the one that's in charge. You get up in the morning, you seek Him in His Word, you seek Him in prayer, you'll do alright.

Because He will see to it that you do alright. You know, I wrote something the other day, I tweeted something, and a guy was real sarcastical, he said like, oh that was an oversimplification, laugh out loud. And what I simply said was, often times I'm spiritual weakness.

And if you will do that, you'll be alright. And I know it's hard to believe as a young Christian, why? Because you're like me. You read five chapters, and then you ask yourself, what did I just read? I don't have a clue.

What did I just read? Do you often do that, or am I the only one that does that? Right? You read through the entire Bible in a year, and you still can't find Micah. Okay, and you think, I'm not making much progress here. But here's what you need to see.

This is not over a period of a year. It's not over a period of two years. It's not over a period of three years.

It's over a period of a lifetime. One of the ways that Satan really gets us is discouragement in our time alone with God. Because you will set yourself to read the Word, and then after you read it, in the morning you go, I don't remember anything.

This is where you must fight. Because again, it's not your ability to understand the Word, but the power of the Word itself. If you can do things to make your memory better, or your Bible study better, if you can learn things from your pastor, fine, do that on how to have a better time alone in the Scriptures.

But what I'm saying is, if you will just stick to it, if you will just read God's Word, and if you will just cry out in prayer, and you will do that consistently, you'll be alright. Over a period of years you will grow, and you will mature, because of the power of the Word of God, and because of the faithfulness of God. All you have to do is keep going.

Keep going. And everything's a fight. You know a lot of people don't read the Bible for this reason.

Not just because they make it through Genesis and Exodus, and then get to Leviticus and pass out. There's another reason. They see people who read the Bible all the time, and they think those people are gifted.

They're just gifted in that. It's easy for them, and that's why they do it. That everyone that I've ever known that is consistent in studying the Scriptures, meditating upon the Scriptures, they did so in a knock-down, drag-out fight.

Then there are other people who say, you know, I don't pray. That person prays a lot. It's just their gift.

Well, I won't deny that there are some people who are given special grace to pray. But the majority of people that I've ever known, including myself, prayer... You see, you think it's not for some people, and that's why they can do it. No, it's just as much a fight for them as it is for you.

They just know that they've got to have prayer in the Scriptures, or they will die. If I grabbed you and held your head under the water, you would fight with a great strength, because you know you need air. You need Scripture.

There's a great football illustration that I heard a couple of months ago that was just amazing. The reason I liked it is because I didn't hear it from a preacher. It had nothing to do with Christianity.

I just heard this coach talking about it. He had this young guy who came to him and said, I want to play pro ball. You tell me to do it, I'll do it.

He says, meet me at the beach. This coach was big. Led this young man out into the water.

Further, it's just treading water. Big old coach is still standing there. And he grabbed the young man by the back of the neck and held him under the water.

And the kid is going crazy, clawing at his arms, everything else. And right before, I guess this kid is about to expire, he's starting to go limp. That coach pulled him out of the water and said, when you want to play pro football, as bad as you just wanted to breathe.

I thought that was a great illustration. How bad? How much do I believe it? How bad? How much do I believe it? How bad? Do I really, really believe this stuff? Do I really, really want it? And that's, I think, why Paul uses athletic metaphors so often. Because he looked around, and he saw men like we do, and women like we do.

You know, a child, you know, is six years old, goes to some gymnastics school, and immediately they find out the child's gifted. Do you realize that that child's life is totally changed from that moment on? That kid no longer eats what everybody eats. That kid no longer sleeps when everybody else sleeps.

Doesn't go and play like everyone else. His whole life now is transformed until he's like 17, 18, 20 years old. Every bit of his life is regimented towards one thing, towards winning a gold medal that isn't even gold.

And that's why Paul said he regimented his life. He ordered his life for these types of things. And our lives are filled with so many things that steal my time away from the Lord.

You know, if you have small children, I can tell you to just take a test. Let them watch TV for a month. See what past time, whenever they're finished with their studies or whatever, just let them watch TV, anything.

See what kind of home you've got in a month. Another thing you can do is just let them watch TV, but make it wonderful, good programs. Still see what you've got in a month.

Or order their life to seek greater things. And you'll see a total difference. And it's the same way, we must cut certain things out of our lives to seek God.

I tell the story, and I don't even know if it's true, but it goes around, it's a great illustration, that a great violinist was playing his last concert in Europe, and a young man walked up to him and said, Sir, I give my life to play like you. I have given my life to play like you. Leonard Ravenhill, a friend of mine, told him that I was really going through some struggles, and he sent me a track.

In some areas I'd be careful with the track, but the track basically says, others can, you cannot. It says, others may feel the freedom to do this, and do this, and do this, and do this, but if you truly desire a relationship with me, my anointing, everything else, you cannot. And that's a choice, too, that we all must make, isn't it? And that's why worth is always being put before us.

His worth. Is he worth it? Is he worth it? This is not about rewards. This is not about you going to heaven.

This is the main question. Is he worth it? Is he worth you ordering your day? Is he worth you struggling in Scripture? You know, I tell men, a lot of men will come up to me and go, you know, I just can't understand the Bible. I go, you work at so-and-so factory, don't you? Maintenance.

Yeah, I do. Pretty high up, you've got to deal with a lot of stuff, electrical and everything else. The plant shuts down if you don't do your job right.

I said, do you ever been given something? Your boss walked in and says, look, this is the manual for the new machine and tool and dar, or whatever, this is the new manual, and I need you to know this stuff. When you read it the first time, did you get it? No. Second time? No.

Third time? He says, man, I've had to read those manuals and stay up all night sometimes to get those things. And why do you do that? Keep my job. So you'll be willing to do everything in your power to keep your job.

Stay up, burn the midnight oil, but you read one chapter of the Bible, say you don't understand it and give up. Can't be that way. You see, there's a balance.

I started off by talking at just beholding God, not giving much emphasis to discipline. But there's also the idea of discipline, young people. If you will be consistent and invest time daily in seeking Him and reading His Word, it adds up.

Maturity will come, or at least you'll increase. Don't be discouraged. I know it's one of the reasons why you struggle in reading the Word or you struggle in praying.

I can't tell you how many times I have set myself to an hour and 45 minutes on the side of my bed and wake up five hours later crippled on the side of my bed having slept and slobbered all over the sheet. I can't tell you how many times I've set myself. But here's the thing, is it worth it? Another thing I want to encourage you is don't go from zero to 60.

You say, well, I'm only studying the Bible, you know, 15 minutes a day. Well, if last month you were studying the Bible zero minutes a day, I'd say it's a pretty good improvement. Also, don't just read chapters in the Bible.

Read through the Bible. Try to make it a life discipline to read through the entire Bible once a year. Or just go through it at your own speed.

The wonderful thing about the Bible, one thing I did when I was a young Christian, I did this particularly in the New Testament first and then the Old Testament. I read through the New Testament. And everything I didn't understand, I wrote out.

Every verse I didn't understand, I would write, you know, just a simple statement about this day. I don't understand what Paul said. So when I get done reading through the New Testament, I had a great big notebook of just questions.

What was amazing is the Bible is a way of answering. When I read through the second time, I could answer some of those questions. I didn't really know what faith was when Paul was talking about faith all the time in Romans 4. Then I got over to Ephesians, got over to Hebrews 11 and understood the definition of faith.

Then went back to 4 and understood the illustration he's giving with Abraham and Sarah. And as I read through the New Testament, I would answer my questions and new questions would come up. To the point where I had all these questions and all these answers.

You see, one of the things that's very important, especially young guys who are kind of reformed, the only book they read is Ephesians and Romans. But when you read some Puritan and he was going to teach you on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, you go to Zechariah or something. The reasons for that is a few chapters in certain books.

They're constantly reading through the Bible. You have to do that when you don't have a concordance, when you don't have a computer. If you'll do that, just reading through the Bible, reading through the Bible, you'll see a transformation.

You will increase in the presence of God in your community.

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