

Our Ambition Is to Please Him

by Paul Washer

The sermon emphasizes the importance of pleasing God and having a pure ambition to serve Him, with the ultimate goal of being swallowed up by life in Christ.

Duration: 1:19:31

Scripture: Romans 2:6

Topics: "Eternal Life", "Judgment Day"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the purpose that God has prepared for each individual. He emphasizes the longing for eternal life and the desire to be clothed in immortality. The speaker also highlights the importance of ambition in serving the Lord and the anticipation of being judged by Christ. The sermon concludes with a reminder of the gravity of the gospel message, with the possibility of spending eternity in either glory or hell.

Transcript

It is a tremendous privilege for me to be here tonight with all of you. It's an awesome privilege and a tremendous responsibility on my part. All this afternoon, especially when I came in here, I just felt overwhelmed at the responsibility of speaking here.

And so desperate my heart is that this not be a vain exercise. There's so little time. Our lives go by so quickly.

So much of what I've looked back on the past of my life, even my Christian life, vain works, lost moments, every one of them worth all the money in the world. And even to do things in the name of God, without being in the center of His will, or without His power, it's useless, it's just all vanity. And I have great joy and confidence tonight in my God, but I'm also quite aware of the absolute need.

And I will think back probably 40 years from now and look back on this moment and realize I didn't have a clue about the size of my need. For a young person, that's very important. You recognize the need of God in your life, but so little you really know about how much you need Him.

But you will grow, because He will daily, year by year, cut your floor out from underneath you, so that eventually you have nothing to walk on, but every time you look down, you see a rock below your feet. We're going to go to 2 Corinthians chapter 5 tonight. 2 Corinthians chapter 5. The whole chapter is worth

an infinite number of sermons.

It can never be exhausted. There are very high things, very mighty things, motivating things that the Apostle Paul says here. But we'll start in verse 9. He says, Therefore, we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him.

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men. But we are made manifest to God, and I hope that we are made manifest also in your consciences.

For we are not again commending ourselves to you, but are giving you an occasion to be proud of us, so that you will have an answer for those who take pride in appearance and not in heart. For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God. And if we are of sound mind, it is for you.

For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died. And he died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for him who died and rose again on their behalf. Therefore, from now on we recognize no one according to the flesh, even though we have known Christ according to the flesh.

Yet now we know him in this way no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature. The old things passed away.

Behold, new things have come. Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation. Namely, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them.

And he has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us. We beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

He made him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in him. Let's pray. Father, I come before you in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ.

And I know, Father, that we always pray, after we read and before we preach. But that's not why I'm coming to you. Lord, I know you hear me, and I ask for your help, for your grace, your mercy upon myself and upon your people.

Lord, if anyone came here tonight to hear a man, I pray that you would make a fool out of me so that they would stop doing such stupid things. Only your presence, Lord, and your kindness to us tonight could make this anything other than a vain event. We trust in you, God, and we ask that you would help your people and prove once again your power to speak through rocks and donkeys.

In Jesus' name, Amen. In verse 9, Paul says, Therefore also we have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him. Sometimes Paul, in the New Testament, makes remarkable statements that most of us would be afraid to make.

One of them is, be imitators of me. I mean, when I think about the power of that statement, the boldness of the Apostle Paul, I'm timid, I'm afraid, I don't know when I've ever made that statement, nor do I think I ever might make that statement. And yet, this statement to me is just as bold, for he says, We have as our

ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to the Lord.

Paul is saying, I have a pure motive. I have a pure ambition. That's an amazing statement.

Because when Paul Washer scrutinizes his own life in light of the Word, it's not often that I can say I have a pure motive or a pure ambition. But at the same time, I think as Christians we need to be careful that sometimes we judge ourselves too lightly, but sometimes we are afraid. In the name of shunning pride, we are afraid to acknowledge the righteous work that the God has done in us to make us new creatures and to make us able to acknowledge, yes, young man, be imitator of me as I imitate Christ.

And yes, I do have a noble and a true ambition. No, it did not come from a heart made with my own two hands, but a heart recreated by the power of God. Many times, in the name of humility, in the name of trying to shun or avoid a prideful look, we fail to acknowledge the very power of salvation.

And we ought to stop doing that. We know that we can do no thing apart from Christ, but we should know that we can do all things in Him. We know that we were born with a wicked, depraved heart that no one can know.

But we know that we have been born again with a new heart created in the image of God in true righteousness and true holiness. And so I appreciate these statements. And these statements are a rebuke to me and a rebuke to you often with regard to our false humility and not acknowledging what God has done in our life.

Now, with this sermon, I don't really know where we're going. But we're going to go down through here and we're just going to pick out truths that may help us. That may help us.

Now, he says, Therefore, we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to the Lord. I always think about the ambition that I should have on this earth. An ambition to serve Him.

A desire and a passion to love Him and to do His bidding. But what's a remarkable thing to me in this statement is that those who have already made it into glory, they have ambition. Have you ever thought about that? They have ambition.

They have passion. There's this purified emotion, this purified passion, this purified ambition to continue serving the Lord, to continue blessing His name, and to continue worshipping Him. A lot of times we have this idea that someday we're going to pass over into glory and we become almost these spiritual machines.

Or they have these mystical Hindu ideas that somehow we're going to be collectively brought into this oneness with something. But the fact of the matter is, I enjoy the fact that one day when I step over into glory, this passion that I have now is going to explode into greater passion. And whatever is pure about the passion I have now for God is going to explode into absolute, pure, holy passion, so that absolutely everything that I'm passionate about will be right.

Everything the believer who is in glory right now, nothing is ever prohibited from the believer in glory. Every desire that ever even begins to find a corner in the heart of any believer in glory, every one of those desires is met in full because all those desires are pure. Because they are so changed.

So changed. So full of glory. He says, Now, therefore, we also have as our ambition.

Young people, listen to me. Every man is ambitious. Even to say it to a lazy man.

You're lazy and not ambitious. That is not true. For his ambition is slothfulness.

All men have ambition. All men are passionate. Even those who are passionate about not having passion.

All men have ambition. But not all ambitions are right. Not only are not all ambitions right.

Some are downright foolish, disastrous, demeaning, sick, perverted. What is your ambition? What is your ambition? Is it to go to college? Is it to be educated? Is it to get a good job? Is it security? What is your ambition? I can tell you this. You will be empty.

You will be poor. You will be pitiful. You will be miserable.

To the degree that your ambition faces towards anything other than the will of God. Do you realize? And I say this so many times. If you go into Christian bookstores.

You find that 75% of all the books that are in there are written to American Christians who are the most full, most protected, most safe Christians in the history of Christianity. We are the most prosperous Christians in the history of Christianity. And yet you go into our bookstores and 75% of all those books are written about how empty we are.

And do you know why we are empty? For the same reason Jesus Christ was never empty. He said, I have food to eat that you know not of and my food is to do the will of the Father who sent me. Ever find yourself preoccupied with self? You ever find yourself empty? Turn your eyes on Jesus and the will of God.

And the emptiness will go away. What's your ambition? Because if the eye is evil, everything else is darkness. If the direction of your life is anything other than doing the will of God, the Bible labels you a fool.

And a fool is not just a person ignorant of truth. A fool is a rebel, is an immoral man. Because you know what is right.

You know what the Lord has commanded. You know that it is true, that He is the Vine, that only from Him flows life. Everything else is vanity.

Your youth, your strength, your beauty, it will all rot in the dust. The only thing that matters is doing the will of God. But realizing this, that even the doing of the will of God can be perverted into a false ambition.

If the primary aspect of that will is not to love the Lord thy God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength. Some of you young men need to realize something, that the ambition of ministry is one of the deadliest serpents ever conceived in the heart of man. Ambition for knowledge can be the very thing that keeps you from God.

Although, you'll hear me preach some other time, and I will tell you that truth is foundational, that right doctrine is foundational to all true Christian living, and yet the pursuit, the ambition for knowledge will destroy you. Because it is not a goal in the Christian life. It is a means to a goal, which is intimate knowledge of God, and an intimate relationship with God.

I see so many young men today caught up in what I believe in this country to be a true reformation. A true working of the Spirit of God to raise up a group of young men and women, who are going to be true to His cause and true to His Word, and yet, even in this great work of God, I see a terrible thing happening. Ambition! Ambition for knowledge, because in knowledge there's power, and power is always an evil thing, except it is the power of God under His sovereignty.

So, he says here, have this, our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him. Martha, Martha, there are so many things you are so preoccupied with. When was the last time you sat down and just did a Bible study asking one question? Lord, teach me, can you teach me what is pleasing to Thee? And then pray much about the Lord empowering you to do that which is pleasing to Him.

We're so busy with so many pursuits that we should not follow. The older I get, the more simple the Christian life seems to become. The truths of God, the farther you go into them, it seems sometimes the more complex they are, the more hard they are to understand, but for my part, and what the Lord requires of me, it seems to be rather simple, rather simple.

To know Him should be my ambition. Just Him as the ultimate goal. A lot of people want to know God as a means to something else, as a means to greater ministry, as a means to greater usefulness.

No, it's not a means, it is an end. To know Him and then to be pleasing to Him. A man who is called by God to serve on a line in a factory all the days of his life and yet rebels against that will and starts 35 churches in Ethiopia is not pleasing to God.

It's will worship no matter what is the outcome. But your passion should be simply to find, Lord, what is pleasing to Thee? What do you require of me? Now, he says this, he says, we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him. Now, we have to ask ourselves, we stand back for a moment and say, what is this motivation for Paul to have this one ambition? Why does he have this one ambition? What is the thing that produces this ambition in Paul? Well, the part of this passage that we didn't read, verses 1-8 are very, very important.

And he says something very important that I want us to see in verse 4. He says, for indeed, while we are in this tent, while we are alive in our mortal bodies, we groan being burdened because we do not want to be unclothed but to be clothed so that what is mortal will be swallowed up by life. Now, look in verse 5. For he who prepared us for this very purpose is God. Now, I want you to think about something.

For what purpose has God prepared you? For what purpose? You know, when you're a young boy and you want to go out for Little League baseball or something and you find that the coach is constantly giving you jobs that aren't that prominent on the team. That was my case. Paul, go fix the fence.

There's water needed here, Paul. You see him just working with a kid and he pulls the kid aside and he says, I've got a tremendous purpose for you. That motivates a child.

That motivates a kid. It motivates a man. What is God's purpose for you? And look at this.

This is the purpose for which He has prepared you to be swallowed up by life. Think about that. While you are in this body, no matter how much you grow in Christ, no matter how mature you become, you are still going to have groanings and frustrations and all sorts of things.

If you get into the ministry and you enjoy a sense of the presence of God and doing His will, there's still going to be a struggle. There's still going to be defeat. There's still going to be hardships.

There's going to be frustrations. But then you'll look and say, for what have I been made? For what have I been bought? Why have I been recreated? To be literally swallowed up by life. Young people, this is shadow land.

This is the dream. This is Plato's cave. This is the shadow on the wall.

You see, this is a thing through which we must pass. We are pilgrims and we must pass through it. It is necessary that these things be done for the will of God to be fulfilled and for God to be glorified.

But we were not made for this abnormal state. But God has purposed that we be swallowed up by life. As I always say, yesterday I was 9, today I'm 44, tomorrow I'll be 90.

Life goes by so fast. And I hear secular men and even some Christians grieving about how life goes by so fast. I would that I could close and open my eyes and I would be in glory.

I don't grieve that life goes by fast. I groan that it does not go by fast enough. So that this man, who must at times groan, who must at times be afraid, who must at times struggle with this life, will one day literally be swallowed up in life.

The very life of God. What an encouragement that is for us to serve the Lord and to do His will. What great encouragement is there that no matter what happens to me, no matter the trials, no matter the sufferings, no matter the hardships in this mortal body, I look ahead to the fact that I am to be swallowed up by life.

What was the one philosopher who basically said, snuff out the candle. He says, I wither. He was on his deathbed and he said, I wither as a dried up old leaf.

I will fall to the ground, be crumbled and pass into nothing. And the Christian says, please, put out the candle, because the sun is coming up. What a life stands before us.

I always hear this thing, and I hear it more often and more often. You're so heavenly minded, you're no earthly good. Well, I say you're so earthly minded, you're no heavenly good.

Because that is our hope, that is an ambition thing that promotes the right ambitions in me. It's a lovely thing. More than that, it's a powerful thing.

To have your eyes focused on eternity. To have your eyes focused on the hope that awaits. What awaits this man? What awaits me? No, not Charles Spurgeon.

Not Jonathan Edwards. Just me. Pitiful me, that if you stayed with me three weeks, you would be disappointed.

Me! This bumbling, silly, half-hearted preacher. If he can even be called such a thing. Think about it.

Me! Not just the big guys. Not just the winners. Not me.

I'm to be swallowed up in life. Right along with that thief who died on that tree and was swallowed up in life. Obviously, I do not preach well tonight.

And obviously, the Spirit is not working. Because if it were, you would be on your faces, either worshipping God or dancing on the tops of these chairs. What a joy is ours.

Now, he goes on and he gives us another reason for such a motivation to serve the Lord. And it is somber and it is serious and it is solemn. But it is not morbid.

It is not morbid. Not for the believer. He says this, For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ.

And I like it that it says, Appear rather than stand. Because I'm not so sure anybody would be standing on that day. It says, Appear.

As I've heard Brother Leiter say, At times someone will say, You know, make a bold statement. Well, I'll stand there. I'll deal with... No, you won't deal with God.

You will melt before Him like a tiny wax figurine in a blast furnace. But he says this, Paul, the apostle, said that he had a great ambition to please the Lord. And this was one of the reasons.

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ. All of us. So that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body.

According to what he has done, whether good or bad. Now, I want you to look at a few things here. First of all, deeds.

And then body. And then done. I think these three words are extremely important.

And they're left out of most evangelical conversation today. They act as a stronghold, though, to protect us. And it's this, first of all.

For your deeds. I want you to look at that. Each one will be recompensed for his deeds in the body.

According to what he has done. You know this thing that is so common among evangelicals in America today. Well, you know, in my heart.

In my heart. You know, I don't need to look in your heart. And although God does look in your heart, and will look in your heart, I want to tell you something.

He doesn't have to look in your heart to judge you. No one does. Jesus made that quite clear in Matthew chapter 7. No one has to look in your heart.

And the old statement of, well, you can't judge a book by its cover, is demonic. It's not true. Jesus never said that.

As a matter of fact, Jesus said just the opposite. Jesus never said that you can't judge a book by its cover. He said you can judge a tree by its fruit.

What you need to see is this evangelical, pietistic, and false statement that you cannot judge my Christianity by what I do, because you can't look in my heart. If I see what you do, I don't have to look in your heart. Because what you do, and especially what comes out of your mouth, will tell me everything and even more that I need to know about your heart.

For the mouth and the deeds are a perfect barometer, measuring stick, for the condition of your heart. And that's what's going on here. That all men will one day be judged by what they have done in the body.

Their full body. Eyes, ears, brain, hands, feet. Their body.

You will be judged for what you have done. And you say, well, Brother Paul, hold on. We're saved not by works, but by faith.

And faith is a product of what? Well, faith is a product of regeneration. And what is regeneration? The renewing of a heart and the making of a new creature. The very changing of ontology.

The very course of your being is changed. You're moved into another realm. And no, he is not saying that he will judge you for your deeds, and if your deeds are perfect, you're going to heaven.

What he's simply saying is this. Your deeds are the perfect indicator of whether you have been born again or not. It is the indicator.

We have bought in so long in America to the idea that somehow we can separate the content or caliber or nature of our heart with what we do. And that a person can actually be renewed in their heart and yet live carnally as a style of life continuously. And that is not what Scripture teaches.

The deeds of a man are the measuring stick of his heart. And that's something to listen to. If you go over to the book of Revelation, let's go there for a moment.

In verse 11, he says, Then I saw a great white throne, and him who sat upon it. Chapter 20, verse 11. Then I saw a great white throne, and him who sat upon it.

From whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. Now, it was a great throne because of the one who sat upon it. It was a white throne because of the one who sat upon it.

Absolutely pure, just, holy, fair. Heaven and earth is fleeing away and no place was found for them. We're moving into eternity now.

Everything that had to do with former things is gone. Everything done in the name of will worship and in the flesh will flee away. This one who sits upon the throne is beautiful to his elect and terrifying to those who have rejected him.

There's no place found for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne. Now, I want you to look at something here.

Some people think they are so great that they will never stand before that throne. But they will. But that's not our problem.

Some of us think that we are so small and insignificant that we will simply be overlooked. And neither is that true. The great will stand before Him and none will get out of this day.

And the smallest among men, the most insignificant among men, will also stand before Him on that day and be judged. One will not be delivered because he is great and rich, and another will not be delivered because he is humble and poor. They will all stand before Him and be judged.

This is an awesome category. This is an amazing thing to think about. You have a date with destiny you cannot avoid.

And he goes on and he says this, I saw the dead and the great, the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne. And the books were opened and another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books according to their deeds.

And the sea gave up the dead which were in it. And death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them. And they were judged, every one of them, according to their deeds.

I want to notice two things here. First of all, you cannot escape. You cannot hide in the grave.

You cannot hide in the depths of the sea. You cannot hide even in hell. But you shall be brought up from wherever you are.

You shall be pulled down from wherever you are. And you shall stand before God. Another thing I want you to see that is very, very important is this.

It says in verse 12 and again in verse 13, they will be judged, every one of them, according to their deeds. Verse 12 ends that way, according to their deeds. Verse 13 ends that way, according to their deeds.

Do your deeds reflect a true conversion in your life? Now, we are not saved by the works of the law. We are freed from the works of the law. But Paul tells the church in Thessalonica about a works that spring forth from faith.

James talks about works that validate faith. What I want you to see is something that is probably not too prevalent among you, but in all the places where I preach in America, it is very prevalent. That who you are and what you do cannot be treated as two separate entities.

They are one and the same. Because salvation is not simply you making a decision to jump out of the line going to hell in order to jump into the line going to heaven. Salvation is a supernatural work of God whereby the very nature of a man or a woman or a child is changed.

They become something different. A new creature. Now, you will be judged.

You will. Now, for the sinner, for the unconverted, what does that mean? It's a terrifying expectation of judgment. It is a horrifying thing that some of you will have to experience lest you're converted in the future.

You'll have to experience it. I would estimate, I would believe that you would not be able to stand before that throne, but God will strengthen you to make you stand just so He can judge you. It's terrifying.

And for those of us who believe, it is not terrifying. But it is solemn. I do not believe that the first thing that the true believer will see when he looks at the face of Christ, I do not believe that he will see on that face a frown or a scowl.

I do not. I believe that he will be swallowed up in life and love. For Christ is our interceder, our Savior.

But there is a judgment. And you will be judged. And so will I. To be honest with you, my friend, I think it would be a less painful thing to be judged by an enemy than it would be to be judged by the one who

unconditionally loves.

I'll never forget several years ago, it feels like a hundred years ago, in seminary. It was the first day of class, and on the first day of class in seminary, you don't have class, you just kind of run in and you get your syllabus and you run out. And I was taking a class by a very well-known professor by the name of T.W. Hunt, just a prayer warrior.

He would pray three hours a day for his students. It was just such a pleasure to know the man. The fragrance of Christ was all over him.

And we all kind of ran into class thinking we would just pick up our syllabus, about 30 of us. And I got in there and, well, where were the syllabuses? They weren't there, but Dr. Hunt was standing in the front of the class and he asked all the students to sit down. We thought, kind of unusual.

And he said, he was a man who had memorized just books and books of the Bible. And he was talking to us about Christ and the beauties of Christ. It was a class on worship and what he wanted to do and what he wanted to achieve in that class that semester.

And then he mentioned some obscure verse in some obscure place in Scripture. And he says, would someone please tell me, what does that verse say? Just off the top of our heads, he expected us to answer. And I was looking around like, I don't know.

And he looked at us with love, with love. He looked at us and just kind of sighed. And then he said, well, someone of you please just open up the Scriptures and read it.

And not one person had brought a Bible to class. Because we were just running in there to get our syllabuses. And that old man looked and didn't say another word.

He set someone to handing out the syllabus. He walked back up to the podium and he put his head down. And all of a sudden you just saw tears running down his cheeks, onto his shirt, onto the floor.

And one by one, like those Pharisees who walked away from Jesus when he said, the first one of you who wants to, without sin, cast the first stone. We just all gradually, over a course of about 20 minutes, made our way out of the class. And I was talking to my roommate as we were walking out the door and I said, I would have rather been stoned.

I would have rather have been just cut out of the class, flunked it, have to take it over, than to have to endure so much love for me pouring out of the heart of that man. That judgment. I do believe the first time you look in the face of the Christ, there will be nothing but love.

But love sometimes, love sometimes can break your heart in a million pieces. Now, he goes on. Why did he want to serve the Lord with such ambition? Because he was going to, he was going to see Him.

He was going to be judged by Him. His life was going to be scrutinized by the Christ. And he wanted, he wanted to just offer something there.

He wanted, my little boy, he'll draw a picture or do something, and he just can't wait until I come home from the office. He just wants, he wants more than anything for me to grab that picture and to look at it and say, well, that's the most fantastic, it's the most fantastic thing I've absolutely ever seen in my life. Oh, Dad, do you think so? Oh, I know so.

It's a thing unlike any other thing I've ever seen. I have become convinced that absolutely everything in life is given to me by God to teach me something about Him. I do not dread the day of judgment like a lost man who knows not the blood of Christ.

But I do desire, don't you? Don't you? Desire? Lord! Speechless probably. I'm speechless now. I don't even know how to describe what's in my heart.

But nonetheless, I want to meet Him on that day. And not for my own pride's sake. And not to win some favor from Him.

Because I know, I know that I am loved by Him. But I want to be as approved as I can be in what I have done. And that is a good ambition.

And it should be yours. But I'll warn you, young men, to go after that ambition. You will face the frowns and the scowls of carnal men.

Because make no mistake about it, anyone who seeks to live a godly life in this world will be persecuted. I heard Dr. Ravenhill one time. He said that the Lord had given him a word for the year.

And what was it? Rejection. That he would be rejected. And he said, well, wouldn't you expect anyone seeking to truly serve the Lord in this life to be rejected? What's your ambition? What is your ambition? Now, some of you, I know your hearts.

I mean, you're out there. Some of you will hear a sermon like this and you'll walk out feeling worse than when you came in here. Oh, my ambition's so unpure and I'm so unholy.

Look, that's not the point of this. That's not the point of this. There's no condemnation anymore.

Arise. Follow Him with the breath you have left. Know that every iniquity, every false start, every bad motive has been paid for by the blood of the Lamb.

Just rise up. Don't allow Satan to take a message like this and cast you down at all your failures. But just walk out the door going, I will serve Him with the breath I have left.

And if the very next day you do the very same thing, then the mercies of Christ are new every morning. Stand up again and say, with the breath I have left. With the breath I have left.

And he goes on and he says this, verse 11, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men. Knowing the fear of the Lord. Now, this has two different meanings in my opinion here.

Because the fear of the Lord for a believer and the fear of the Lord for the wicked are two different things. Now, don't try to think that I'm going to say the fear of the Lord for the believer is a much tamer thing. It's not.

It's just without condemnation. It's encircled by unconditional love. Oh, He is a God to be feared.

To stand in awe of. To have reverence for. To speak His name and then stand and tremble.

To be silent in His temple. To know Him in His power and His glory and His majesty and His beauty. To know what He requires of us.

It is a fearful thing, but a fearful, wonderful thing for the believer. But knowing the fear of the Lord, we ought to persuade one another. If you advance farther than me, even as a young man, in the things of the fear of God, if you understand it in a wiser way than I ever will, then come and encourage me in the fear of the Lord.

In the fear of the Lord, persuade me to be a better man. In the fear of the Lord, persuade me to study harder and to pray longer and to give myself more freely. Don't come to me with condemnation.

Don't come to me talking about a father who will hate me because I won't buy it. Bend down that road. It has disastrous results.

This man knows one thing. In all my failures in my life as a Christian, have proved to do one thing in me and that is this. I know now tonight that I do not have to move a quarter of an inch to the left or the right to be loved by my God.

So come to me, as others should come to you, as we should come to one another, and encourage one another in the fear of the Lord. To motivate one another. To persuade each other.

Paul, I call you on the phone, or a brother calls you on the phone and says, I'm tired. I'm war. I just want to stop fighting.

I want to go hide. You tell him, Brother, I'm not going to hang up this phone until I've persuaded you to carry on. Go on! Go farther! No! I don't care how hard it is.

Go on! Because the present sufferings that you are enduring are nothing compared to the glory that awaits you. And the pleasure you will know on that day because you have overcome in the power of your God and you stand before Him on that day knowing that with His great help, you did mighty things. We ought to encourage one another.

To go farther. Sometimes we just pat each other on the back because we haven't done some atrocious thing. Well, we're not hating one another.

We must be Spirit-filled. Paul tells the church, You love! It's magnificent the way you love. Now abound more in love.

Abound more in good deeds. Go farther in your faith. I want to push you to run the race.

And oh, young person, it is such a pleasure to run a race when you're absolutely loved. You cannot fail when He loves you. You cannot fail.

You cannot fail. So for the believer, knowing the fear of the Lord, I persuade you to go farther than you ever dreamed. But for the lost, for the sinner, for the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, treated as pig's blood the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, and offended the Holy Spirit, in the fear of the Lord, I persuade you to stop doing that.

You say, oh, brother Paul, don't say it that way. What other way should I say it? That's one of the problems. All these preachers are telling you that you need to believe and stop walking in your unbelief and you don't realize how heinous your unbelief actually is.

There is no neutrality, lost sinner. There is no neutrality, child of fine Christian parents. There is no neutrality.

You either love Him or you hate Him. You will either stand in His presence totally made perfect or you will fall into hell judged for eternity and under the wrath of God. You're either a God lover or a God hater.

And either the pleasure of God rests upon you or the wrath of God rests upon you. You see, it's one of the problems. We tell people that unbelief is wrong, but we don't tell them how wrong the sinfulness of sin, the sinfulness of unbelief.

It's to trample underfoot the blood of the Son of God. Stop it. Stop it.

Some preachers would tell you if I could show you hell for an instant, you would turn. No, you wouldn't. I would imagine that at this very moment, if God were to throw the doors of hell wide open and tell men that are in there to come out, they can all freely come out and live outside of that wretched place that they will just bow their knee to Him and worship.

They would rather remain in hell. The enmity of a wicked heart is that great against God. I can't show you anything tonight to save you from hell.

The only thing that will save you from hell is God coming down and changing your heart. But don't think that you can blame Him for a wicked heart. Don't think that for a moment.

You'll go to hell not because He has not changed you. You'll go to hell because you refuse to be changed and you refuse to believe. It doesn't have to be that way.

It doesn't have to be that way. Do you realize what you can do to yourself as a preacher by asking God to let you preach like a dying man to dying men? Do you know what you can do to yourself as a preacher to ask God to let you have a sense of eternity? If you ever pray that prayer, then also pray, and God strengthen me that I not go mad. If this was a game, if this was entertainment, if this was just something moral people do to have a good life, then I'd be a cabinet maker in southern Illinois.

But this is a thing of life and death. Especially some of you children need to hear this because you hear the Gospel week in and week out and you do not understand. This is life and death.

There are people here tonight who will go to glory so transformed that if we were to see their image as they will be one day, we'd have a tendency right now to bow down and worship them. They will be so glorious. And yet there will be others here that will be so wretched and vile as God takes whatever grace they've ever known off of them and they're cast into hell that they would make a monster, a monster look like a pleasant creature.

Some of you will spend eternity in hell and some of you will spend eternity in glory. That's a weighty thing for a man to endure. To look at faces knowing they're going to hell.

He says, therefore knowing the fear of the Lord we persuade men. It's been very common recently. I hear young preachers saying, well, I don't give an invitation in my church.

I don't give an invitation in my church. Is it some badge? I don't give an invitation in my church. Well, I will agree in this sense that most of the invitations given in church are nothing but emotional manipulation.

To get someone to sign a card so that the evangelist can go down and brag at the next church how many people got saved even though none of them will come to church on Sunday. But not give an invitation? Every word and every facial expression ought to be giving an invitation. And sometimes, you are so careful about not manipulating men that you share the gospel like a cold dead fish.

The fact of the matter is we should plead with men. Whitefield standing up there preaching blood coming out of his mouth, pleading and weeping over men to be saved. Spurgeon crying out to men to be saved.

Jesus Christ weeping over Jerusalem to be saved. Paul, the apostles, persuade, convince. This is a strong word.

Every bit of the armament God has given me I'm going to use to go after your soul. Remember this old preacher? He was Wesleyan. Holiness was one of the greatest preachers I've ever heard in my life.

I'll never forget one night he came out on this platform. Old preacher. Boy, you could just look at him and knew.

He walked out on that thing and he looked at the people and he goes, I'm hunting souls tonight. And he did. He did.

Sometimes we're trying to be so careful about our theology and it's nothing but pride. Because we've got people that we think are important and we want them to think well of us. I ought to preach in certain ways that I offend everybody in everybody's camp.

That's the way Spurgeon was. He'd preach something and those Hyper-Calvinists would get so mad they wouldn't know what to do. And then the Wesleyans would start saying hallelujah and he'd preach something and they would say anathema.

He made everybody mad. I think except the Lord. He believed in sovereign grace.

And he believed in pleading and begging men to come to Christ. All the old preachers. I remember when I was a little boy, just old preachers that would come to my house.

My grandfather was just a staunch, sovereign grace, old missionary to Peru, one of the first in the 1920's, Baptist missionary. A letter from him that I read a while back in which he had walked across the entire state of Kentucky with a suitcase in his hand and lived for six months on bread and milk going to all the mining camps, being run out of so many towns. He believed in the elect.

He believed in the sovereignty of God. And he believed that men had to hear the Gospel. I don't agree with him, but I appreciate one belief he had.

He said, Gospel tracts are for cowards who don't want to face men face to face and preach. Now, I don't believe that. I believe in tracts.

I believe there are some good ones. And I believe in writing them. But there's some stuff there, isn't there? You walk up to a door.

You knock on the door and all the while praying, oh God, don't let them be home. Young men wanted to be bold as lions in the pulpit. You put them out in the middle of a housing project on a street corner and a mouse could knock them down.

We ought to be the type of preachers that plead for men. Beg men. Oh, if we could just grab ahold of one young man.

Grab ahold of one without letting go of the other. But we always go to extremes. Always.

Always. That's why intellectual Calvinism is the most deadly thing on the face of the earth. I take one Arminian filled with fire.

Over 10,000 Calvinists who didn't have enough fire to preach to anyone. Just sit around at tables and fight with each other. But that's another thing, isn't it? He says this, we persuade men, but we are made manifest to God and I hope that we are made manifest also in your conscience.

Listen, gentlemen, young preachers, because I have a burden. I know there are young men here who are serious about the ministry. Let me tell you something.

You need to live your life even denying yourself freedoms at times that the Scriptures give you in order that it might be made manifest to other men your good report and your true motives. I'll never forget one time before I was saved, I was a character. I was a big weight lifter and I wore army pants all the time and I had an earring here and hair about this long and a beard and I just growled at people.

And I remember the Lord had saved me and I went and a few weeks later, I shaved my beard and I cut my hair and took out the earring and everything else and I was walking there and a really spiritual girl who was working at a booth there handing out tracts on campus, she said, Paul? And I said, yep. She said, what did you do? I said, well, I got rid of some old stuff. She's going, well, Paul, be careful.

You don't fall into legalism. Don't let people press you into trying to look a certain way. And I quoted something to her that I had just heard an evangelist preach a couple nights before.

I said, listen, sister, I'd shave my head. I'd do whatever it requires not to be an offense to men. I'd give away my freedom.

I'm glad he said it because I would have never known to say this. I said, I'd give away every freedom. Give away every freedom that I might be able to speak the Gospel to men and that I not be an offense to them, but the Gospel be an offense to them.

You need to live in such a way. These TV preachers, a lot of them, even if they preached a solid Gospel, which they do not, most of them have no right to preach because they live in a way that would offend the conscience of men. We need to be careful not to do that.

We need to live the life. We must live the life and we must be servants of all men. Servants of all men.

Doing whatever it requires. Do you realize that the great majority of people in the United States are not offended at the Gospel? Because they would be, but they're not because they've never heard it. And many times they've never heard it because they stumble over the preacher before they could ever hear the message.

Because of his lifestyle. We need to be very, very careful. We need to be careful not to fall into bondage.

We need to be very careful not to fall into false condemnation. But we need to understand that we are servants and what does it matter what we have to give up in order to communicate the Gospel to men? He

goes on and he says this. He says, We are not again commending ourselves to you, but are giving you an occasion to be proud of us, so that you will have an answer for those who take pride in appearances and not in heart.

Now, Paul the Apostle is not just trying... You see throughout this letter and others, that he is defending his apostleship. He's defending himself, saying, I am true. I am the real thing.

I am an apostle. And one would think that Paul just had a low self-esteem or something or was worried about what people thought about him. That wasn't the case at all.

You see, it wasn't the Apostle Paul. And it wasn't what men thought of him. It was the truth he preached.

He was defending the truth he preached. He was defending his calling and his authority to preach that truth. And it's very, very important.

So many times I had a friend and I rebuked him. And then after I rebuked him, I saw the same thing in myself. And it was this.

I'll never forget, we all prided ourselves there in the street ministry of living very poor and letting everybody know it too. And I'll never forget, any time like if I came in and he had a new chair or something or a new couch, I'll never forget, I'd walk in and say, wow, you got a new chair. That's really pretty.

Well, someone gave that to me. Okay. One day, you know, man, where did you get that new guitar? Well, someone was throwing it out and I bought it for \$5.

Do you see how much that stinks? Do you see what was going on there? He should have been able to say nothing because he shouldn't have cared in some sense of defending himself. But there is a sense in which at times we have to prove the integrity of our lives because it's not our reputation at stake. It's the Gospel that we preach.

The Gospel that we preach. Now, I want to go on to something that's very important. He says here, verse 13, For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God.

If we are of sound mind, it is for you. Now, what does that mean? Well, it's a very difficult passage in the Greek. And I don't really need to look at the Greek because it's also very difficult in the English.

It is a very, very difficult passage. What does he mean? Well, I believe he means this after looking at both. For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God.

How many times was Paul referred to as insane? How many times was he attacked? I mean, Paul's insane. I mean, he's out of his mind. Now, why would anybody think that? His zeal.

His passion. The hardships he suffered. The things he taught.

The extent to which he was willing to go for the Gospel. And also, I could imagine that a man who had such heavenly visions, preaching those heavenly visions to men who he knew were going to either die and go to heaven or die and go to hell. You could imagine that at times he got beside himself.

I think that's something wrong with preaching today. I was preaching in a church of some reputation years ago, and I remember a wealthy church, a very large church, and I couldn't figure out why on earth they'd

ask me to be there. And I saw some people up in the balcony and they were kind of snickering and things as I spoke about hell and about heaven and about the cross of Christ.

My shirt was all wet with tears. I had been crying and screaming and pleading with the people. And then the Lord just impressed upon my heart.

I just stopped and I said, you think I'm a madman. And some of you will come back tonight just to watch a madman rave. But let me ask you a question.

In talking about God, in talking about the cross, in talking about heaven and hell, life and death, wouldn't you expect me at times to be a madman? How can a man know these things and preach these things with culture and respectability all the time? One of the greatest problems when a preacher becomes civilized and respectable, he's of no use to God. Again, I go back to something. This is not just about secular humanism, about just making your life good while you live here and then perish like a beast.

This is about eternity. Some of you will go to hell. Wouldn't you expect a man who has been called to live for these things to be somewhat wild? And in this twisted, stupid age to seem out of his mind? They all said Paul was mad.

And to a twisted, carnal man he would be. But they called his Messiah a madman too. A Samaritan with demons.

Imagine, what do you think it was like for Christ to stand there on that day and say in a Nazarene accent, I am the way, the truth, and the life. Do you not realize they thought him a madman? A carpenter from Nazareth? The way, the truth, and the life. Come and drink.

Eat of your flesh. What are you? Don't we say rightly you have a demon? I pray that God would raise up some young men that will go so far beyond me. I pray that God would raise up young men that just... Young men, don't pride yourself in being able to cross every T and dot every I theologically.

Desire to stand in His presence and to know Him and to know that when you lift your voice to heaven, He hears you. And your name is known there as well as hell. A madman.

But then he also says, and I think to caution young preachers also, he says this, and if we are of sound mind, it is for you. He's saying we do give you weighty and sound arguments. There's nothing Paul said that contradicted the prophets of old.

He was able to lay down the logic with the best of them. Some of the book of Romans, even by secular logic professors, they admire what Paul did. You see, many of the classic arguments of logic, Paul was sound mind.

Christ, who spoke like this man? But here's something Paul was trying to say in the church of Corinth. Look, if I speak with wise arguments, it is not that I am seeking to win you for my own advantage, but I use this wisdom and this logic and this soundness for your own good. A man who just speaks like a madman is a madman if he never comes to earth and speaks with a reason that can be understood by a child.

He goes on and he says this, an answer for those who take pride in appearance and not in heart. When are we going to learn this truth? When? Appearance is everything today. It's nothing to God.

It stinks in His nostrils. Heart, not appearance. I pray that God will raise up a young man, but he will not be like King Saul.

He will be like the Apostle Paul. Nothing in him. Who is this babbler? He has no power of speech.

He's not bold in our presence. Don't worry so much about appearance. Don't worry so much about the proper etiquette in preaching.

Don't worry so much about being dignified among men. Cut yourself off every chance you get from the arm of the flesh, because it's the heart. You want God to use you.

Tarry with Him. Live with Him. Walk with Him.

Pass the midnight watch with Him. Come out of bed. He'll meet you there.

You won't be a preacher unless at least sometime the sun comes up and there's dew on your head because you've sought Him all night. You're cold with the wet dew. You won't be any count to Him going out on Christian retreats and getting together with your friends and singing Kumbaya.

You'll be a count to Him when you separate from the boys and go up on a hill and throw rocks at the gates of heaven until God answers. You can know everything and not know a stinking thing. You can.

You can. It's not about truth. It's about Him.

And truth is a means. It's not the goal. Verse 13, we have said.

We'll move on. We won't finish. I won't keep you, but I want to go to verse 14.

He says, "...for the love of Christ controls us." Now, there's a debate grammatically. Is it Paul's love for Christ or Christ's love for Paul? And I think John answered the question. Paul loved Him because Christ loved him first.

It is always primarily, never is this order interchanged. Paul was primarily motivated by Christ's love for him, but it is impossible for a man to taste of such things. If that man has a renewed heart, it is impossible not to return that love at least to some degree.

And this word compels. It's almost a word in which you go, ok, there is no English word. We're going to have to write out about 20 words to get this one.

It means compels, but also restricts to push and to bind, to even make a prisoner of a captive controlled by his love. He would always say that he was a prisoner in chains. You know, because he was.

There were chains. He had them on him. But I think when Paul was referring to that, he meant something much more.

He was a prisoner of Christ. He could have turned his back on Christ and been out of those chains in a second. They would have exalted him back to Judaism and used him as their prize to show Christianity was all wrong.

It wasn't chains that helped Paul. It was love that helped Paul. I knew a young man at no small university who was on his way to many things.

And he was converted. And he started going out and standing on the student mall and preaching and handing out tracts just a few days after his conversion. And some of his friends, who were Christians, came and said, do you know what you're doing? I mean, they embraced the young man and said, look, we're your friends.

Look what you're doing. I mean, people began to talk. They think you're out of your mind.

What are you doing out here? Girls are laughing at you. Guys are mocking you. What on earth are you doing? And I'll never forget, that young man turned around and he goes, what do you want me to do? What can I do? I don't have any other choice.

I'm a prisoner. He died for me. He really died for me.

What do you want me to do? What else can I do? I'm a prisoner of his love, of what he's done. I'm free. You'd expect something out of me, wouldn't you? Paul says the love of Christ compels.

If your desire to win an argument compels you, shut your mouth. The love of Christ compels me. And that's a good sign for absolutely everything you do.

The way you talk to somebody, the way you act, everything. Just ask yourself, is this being compelled by the love of Christ? It's terrifying. You know, people talk about the law and the lightning and the thundering and the high standard and everything.

None of that. Take the whole thing and it can't measure up to this thing right here. The love of Christ controls us.

Having concluded this, that one died for all. You see, nothing else is strong enough medicine. Nothing else.

Young person, listen to me. When you're converted the first few years, a lot of times God puts His hand over you, protects you with such grace, and you think that Christianity is a quite easy thing, and little by little He's going to pull that back, it's going to get difficult. The only thing that's strong enough medicine is the love of Christ.

The love of Christ. You're going to fail in your desires for piety. You're going to fail in your ministry.

You're going to take two steps forward, three steps back. You're going to wonder why you ever got into this fight. There are so many things that are going to happen.

So many shipwrecks along the way. So many battles. There's only one thing.

He loves me. He loves me. Of all the things and gifts that God has ever given Paul Washer, I would have to say the greatest is an assurance in the light of all my failures that I am loved.

Pentecostal one time said they always like to talk about the greatest act of faith is raising the dead. I say, well, that's nothing for a Baptist. I do that every Sunday when I preach.

Raise the dead? That's not a big deal. I say, you really want to know the hardest thing of faith, the greatest demonstration of faith, it is to look in the mirror of God's Word and to see your shortcomings and then to believe God loves you as He says He does. That is the greatest act of faith.

And what a glorious thing to have that assurance. I had a young man. He wrote me a while back.

He's from seminary. And he said, I am so unrighteous and I am so ignorant of God. And he was writing all this thing about how terrible he was.

And so I wrote him back and I said, young man, you are much more ignorant and much more unholy than you now know. Love, Paul. I have the gift of encouragement.

And so he calls me up on the phone. He goes, thanks? And I said, look, you are so far beyond me in your passion, in your knowledge of things, that I'm sometimes ashamed to be in your presence. But I'm happier than you are.

And I said, because your joy is idolatrous. You're happy when you do right. You're happy when you know something.

You're happy when you shine. You're happy in what you do when you do it. I'm happy in the finished work of Jesus Christ on my behalf.

He loves me. He loves me. He died for me.

And He died for all, verse 15, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf. Now here's something we have to be very, very careful of when we touch this passage, and it's this. It's almost, I mean, we can take this passage and turn it into a drudgery.

It's almost like an emotional manipulation. Okay, He died for you. The least thing you can do is serve Him.

That's not the job of a preacher. And that's not what Paul's saying here. It is not my job to stand before you and put you on a guilt trip because He died for you and the least thing you can do is give your life for Him.

That's not what he's saying. You see, if you've truly been regenerate, if you've truly been regenerated, if God has truly done a work in your life, then you don't need a preacher like me coming to you and telling you, okay, He died for you, now you need to give your life for Him, and if you don't, you're really a creep. No, what I need to be telling you is He died for you.

Now let me explain everything it means that He died for you. He carried your sin for you. He stood, as John Gill said, in your law place.

He became a curse. 2 Corinthians 5.21 He became sin. Even John Calvin wouldn't touch that passage because he was afraid of it.

And He died under the wrath of God. And He rose again because of your justified. And He ascended to the right hand of the Father.

And He intercedes for you. And He ever lives to do that. And He loves you.

And He cherishes you. And He cares for you. And the regenerate heart goes, with each thing, You say, what's the difference? Everything in the world.

Everything in the world. It's not a guilt trip of you need to somehow balance the scale. You need to balance the scale.

He died for you. Now you need to live... Do you honestly think you can balance the scale? You spend your life balancing the scale, you end up in an insane asylum or blow your brains out. You can't balance the scale.

You can't earn this love. But it's to grow in this love. And your heart becomes happy.

Your heart becomes warm. I love that old song. It's, I sing because I'm happy.

I sing because I'm free. I want to follow Him. It's like the urban legend.

I suppose it's an urban legend about Abraham Lincoln. You know, he goes and he's walking there and there's slave trading going on. He goes up and sees this young woman on a platform with chains around her neck and men are trying to buy her and all sorts.

And he walks up there and he starts bidding on her. His heart's broken in two. He starts bidding and bidding.

He outpays them all and he buys her. Walks her outside of the city. He signs her papers.

He takes the chain off of her neck and says, you're free. And she says, I'm free. He said, you're free.

She said, you mean I can do whatever I want to do and go wherever I want to go? And he said, yes. And she said, then I want to go with you. Then I want to go with you.

He did all this for me. You know, someone's been preaching as long as I have. You would expect a better sermon than the one you got tonight.

You would expect some deeper theology. I already know more than I'll ever be able to apply in 300 years. I just want you to walk with Him.

And I want you to be happy in Him. I just want you to be happy in Him. In Him.

Everything in Him. I want you to sing in Him. I want you to be free in Him.

I want you to serve Him with all your might, not because you're under a guilt trip or trying to earn somebody's love that you never got from somebody else. Know you are loved. And if you're lost here tonight, you don't know Christ.

Maybe you're saying, well, I've spurned Him a thousand times. It does not matter. His love is so great.

It is so great. You say, well, what must I do? What they've been telling you for a long time.

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