

The Joy of Giving It All (Part 4)

by Paul Washer

Presenting our bodies as a living and holy sacrifice is motivated by God's love for us, not our love for Him, and is the only reasonable thing to do.

Duration: 1:08:08

Scripture: Romans 12:1

Topics: "Spiritual Renewal", "Conforming To God"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of spending time in the word of God and renewing our minds. He highlights the danger of being influenced by the fallen world and urges believers to present themselves as living sacrifices to God. The speaker encourages listeners to avoid conforming to the ways of the world and instead be transformed by the renewing of their minds. He concludes by praying for God's help in living according to His will and for the message to benefit His kingdom.

Transcript

This podcast is part of the mypodcast.com network. Go online right now and get your very own 100% free podcast, mypodcast.com. Again, I want to encourage you to come out this evening and to listen, to participate, to be praying, and especially for those who are members here, bring friends. You do know that the Christmas time of year is the highest rate of suicide in the entire year.

People get so built up about what Christmas ought to be and then it just doesn't seem to turn out that way. That's what happens when we take something that is primarily of the Lord and turn it into something secular. There's no life, there's no light, there's no peace.

Maybe if you bring someone tonight, they'll come to know the Lord, they'll come to know Him. Let's open up our Bibles to Romans chapter 12. I want to finish what I started a few weeks ago.

I also want to tell you that, as most of you probably know, today is my last day. And tomorrow, my family and I, we head back to Illinois and back to the mission and then on to Peru. I'm scheduled for Peru, the Ukraine, Siberia, Africa, wherever.

I will be coming back here when I am needed, maybe once a month or however much it takes to help you as you spend this time in transition still looking for a teaching, preaching elder. It has been a tremendous privilege for my family and for me to be here with you. Tremendous privilege.

It will be a great sorrow in our heart to leave. But as I always say, who are we and what are we? Jars of clay, dust, breathing holy breath. We serve a Lord and we serve a master.

And this is not about us. This is not about me. This is not about my family.

This is not about you. It's about the kingdom of God. And it is about the will of that God.

And is it about the advancement of his work and his name, as George Whitfield said when he was dying? I now go the way of all flesh. Let my name die with me that he and he alone might be exalted. That he and he alone might be exalted.

Romans chapter 12, verse one. Therefore, I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God. To present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice acceptable to God.

Which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. So that you may prove what the will of God is.

That which is good and acceptable and perfect. Let's pray. Father, I pray that you would help us.

And that this would be a benefit to your kingdom. A pleasure to you. In Jesus' name, amen.

You may be seated. Just to kind of review verse one to catch us all up. Paul says, therefore, I urge you, brethren.

Two things very, very important here. First of all, Paul is speaking as a pastor. He's speaking as not so much a fiery prophet.

Not so much as a wise and authoritative apostle. But he's speaking as a pastor. He says, I urge you, I encourage you, I exhort you.

It's sort of the same way. And I've used this illustration before. When a parent knows that their child is going down a wayward path.

They are not dispassionate in their words. But they speak with great passion. Child, listen to me.

Hear me. I've been down that road. You must listen.

There is a better way. There is a way that seems right unto a man. But it leads unto death.

It is a pathway of the dead. Don't go down there. Or, listen, child.

Don't be discouraged. You can do this. Come on.

That's kind of the same thing we see here with the apostle Paul. He's urging the people of God. Pleading with the people of God.

Exhorting the people of God to do a certain thing. Now, another thing that is so very important. Especially at the eve of my leaving.

And that is the word brethren. The word brethren is so extremely important. I don't stand up here and preach like God's anointed.

I stand up here and preach like a brother. To brothers and to sisters. Yes, I must pray.

Yes, I must be called. Yes, I must read the word. But the Bible says, in the book of 1 John, that all of you are the anointed of God.

And it is not simply this thing of this one man standing in front of you who knows how to dot every I and cross every T and God is speaking through him. No, every time I say a phrase, I have a desire to speak it forth, run down the platform and sit on the front seat to receive it. I need this as much as you.

And when I preach, you're to be open to correction. And when I come down, I am to be open to correction. We are brothers in Christ.

We have, those of us who have been born again by the Holy Spirit, we all are the anointed of God. We are all to study Scripture. We are all a part of this royal priesthood.

Therefore, I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God. There are so many things used today to manipulate people. And many speakers are master manipulators.

People who can make you dance, make you prance, make you even jump off a bridge. And the ones who speak in the religious realm are usually the best at manipulating people. What is the motivation? He said, I urge you by the mercies of God.

What is it that I am to use to motivate you to give your life away? The one thing I am to use is this. Jesus Christ, crucified and risen from the dead on your behalf. Your motivation comes from the fact that God Almighty has set the sinner free.

Your motivation comes from love. Look at what He has done for you. There is a time for hard rebuke.

There is a time for preaching on the fear of the Lord. But you know the one thing that breaks my heart more than absolutely anything is when my heart is cold or when my way is wayward. When I've been selfish, when I've been arrogant, when I've been all those things and maybe finished the day out, not even thinking about really what I'm doing, and then all of a sudden just look in the mirror and see what I am and realize that before I believed in Him, He loved me and that He loves me still.

It is the love of God, this habitual, continuous, unconditional, never-ending love of God that makes me want to give my life away and be something other than what I usually am. It is God's love. Everything in our life should be motivated by this one thing.

Why should you be kind to your wife? Christ is kind to you. Why should you be truthful and a man of integrity? Because He who called you is faithful. Why should you be a servant? Because He went to the cross and was obedient not only to death, but death on a tree, on a cross.

You see, your motivation is the love of God. Why should you do missions? Because God loves you and healed you. Why should you reach out to people? God reached out to you.

You see, all the motivation comes back from God. But you know what? From all the preaching that I hear on television and things today, I'm beginning to think that for most people, that's just not enough. They're more impressed with the possibility of God maybe giving them a Mercedes than they are with God having given them His Son.

I think if I were to preach a message to all of the people who call themselves Christians in America and just preach on the glory and beauty of Jesus Christ that awaits us in heaven, after I was done, most people would give me a quizzical look and go, Well, but what else? Because Jesus doesn't seem to be enough. But for all true believers, all those who have been regenerated by the power of God, indeed, He is. By the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, the word present, so very important here, to put at His disposal, to lay at His feet, to put yourself in a position that you are useful to Him, to no longer offer the members of your body to unrighteousness as instruments of unrighteousness, but to offer the members of your body to Christ and to His will, to cut yourself off from all those things that would make you unusable and to chase hard after those things that are most pleasing to God.

Present your bodies. I said a few weeks ago this word body is so very important because it keeps us from being superficial and super spiritual. Well, He has my heart.

Well, if He has your heart, He'll have your mind. He'll have your eyes. He'll have your tongue.

He'll have your ears. He'll have your hands. He'll have your feet.

He'll have your body. Can't judge a book by its cover. Jesus didn't say that.

As a matter of fact, He said just the opposite. You see, if you've given Him your heart, that will be displayed in the rest of you. And if it's not displayed in the rest of you, then be careful about making grandiose statements about your heart.

You know, it seems there are songs that speak about our love for God and our love for Jesus, and they're appropriate. We see in the book of Psalms, David speaking about how he loves the Lord. But you know, I've got to the point where it's very, very difficult for me to sing a song like that.

I just don't sing much about my love for God that's worth singing about. Oh, I could sing all day about His love for me, but when I look in the mirror of God's Word, and I take an honest look at the love of Paul Washer, sometimes it makes me nauseous. So many people think, I'm motivated by my love for God.

Well, that won't carry you very far. But I am motivated by God's love for me. And I want to present my body, my life, as a living and holy sacrifice.

It's a living sacrifice. First of all, I think this means something very, very important. That if you have yet to come to know Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, you can give nothing to God.

The Bible says you're spiritually dead, and all your works are dead works. And all our greatest, most just, and most righteous works are nothing but filthy rags before God. In order to offer your life as a sacrifice to God, you have to receive the sacrifice made for you on that tree 2,000 years ago when the Son of God bore your sin and was crushed under the justice of God so that a just God might forgive wicked people.

Also, living works is this idea of zealous, exciting, vigorous Christianity. We get so excited about so many stupid things. So many vain things.

So many things that are not eternal. And we are so excited. And yet, when it comes to Jesus, how vigorous are we in our Christianity? How zealous are we? He goes on and he says, Present your bodies a living and a holy sacrifice.

This means more. This word holy means more than simply, legally, you're dotting every I and crossing every T. See, the word holy comes from its basic root in Hebrew means to cut. Like you're cutting carrots and separating them over.

It means to cut and separate. And being holy is not just that you keep the rules. God is holy because he's unique and separated from all other persons and things.

There is none like the Lord. We're holy when we see him that way. When he is unique in our lives.

When he is separated from everything. He is not common. He is not profane.

He is our God and we love him and run to him. A thing about holiness that I want to say this morning that I wasn't able to say in the last time that I preached on this passage. And it's this.

Most people today think of holiness as separation from sinful things. And that is a step in holiness. But that's not the fullness of holiness.

And that's why people are so, well, confused about it. And they lack motivation. They think holiness is just, I need to stop doing this, this, this, this and this.

And that will make me holy. You stop doing that and that and that and that and that. So that you can run to him.

And participate in his will for your life. And the emphasis here is not always saying, hey, hey, separate from bad things, separate from bad things. The emphasis is, come unto me.

God saying, come unto me, eat at my table. Come to my dwelling place. In the presence of God, there is fullness of joy.

Let me give you an example. When my little boys, Ian or Evan, were learning how to walk. You all know the process, the procedure.

They eventually get where they can pull themselves up on a table. And they'll be pretty confident as long as they've got one hand on that table. They'll kind of just walk around the table.

They'll smile and laugh, but they've always got one hand on the table. Now, as a parent, as a parent, I did not walk a few feet from my sons and go, leave the table, leave the table, leave the table. What did I do? No, I said, come here, come here, come here, come here.

There's a big difference. Come to dad. Come fellowship with me.

Come experience my joy. Come have the pleasure of being in an obedient relationship with me. It wasn't so much about leave the table, leave the table.

It was come to me, come to me, come to me. And that's where we miss it. When you just leave the table, you become a self-righteous, legalistic Pharisee.

But when you leave the table to dwell with him, then it will be well with your soul. Now, another thing about this exquisite example that I've given you from children, it's this. My son has to make, it's probably the first moral crisis in his life.

He's come to a dilemma, a moral challenge. He wants to get to dad, but he wants the table. And he's just found out that at least in his universe, his dad is the unmoved mover.

His dad's not going anywhere. His dad's not going to come any closer. So he has got to make a choice.

How much do I want dad? Holiness is a manifestation of your heart. How much do you want God? Because see, the thing is, you can't have this other stuff and have God at the same time. You've got to make a choice.

You've got to make a choice. I believe in the sovereignty of God in such an extent that it would offend most of you. And yet, I'm not a philosopher.

I'm a theologian. I just tell you what the Bible says. I can't always figure it out.

God is sovereign over absolutely everything. And there's not a maverick molecule in the universe. And yet all the time I am being told, make a choice and that choice will affect you.

Now, there it goes. I could stand here all day. I've read all the books.

I could bring them all out. But it still comes down to this. God is sovereign.

And yes, you are responsible. Present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice acceptable to God. Should that be our desire? Most certainly.

What is your desire? Above all other things, but to be acceptable to God. This word is, I think, more appropriately translated, pleasing to God. It brings the personality of it together.

To be pleasing to a person, not just acceptable to a principle. Your desire to please him. A few years ago, Twyla Parris wrote a song.

She says, I drop my sword and look up for a smile. I can remember as a boy playing basketball, at least that's what I called it. My coach didn't call it that, but playing basketball.

And every time I did something other than throw the ball away or fall down over the free throw line. I looked up at my dad. In hopes of catching a smile.

Just wanted to be pleasing to him. Some of us who are older, we have forgotten about that. But if you had any sort of relationship with a father at all, when you were playing sports.

I mean, if he showed up, it's like you couldn't even concentrate anymore. You were just like, dad, did you see that? Or, oh, I hope dad didn't see that. There was this great desire.

It didn't matter about everybody else. I mean, you know, the greatest coach in the NBA could have been sitting there, but that wasn't important. Dad is looking at me.

And the desire to be pleasing to him motivated you to run when you thought you couldn't run anymore. That's the same thing here. You all are far too mature.

Or in the words of a hillbilly, you've just gotten too big for your britches. You have forgotten that you and I will never be anything other than children. And it should be the desire of your heart.

Your father's pleasure. That it be acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. You want to do something spiritual, it's going to take a whole lot more than a hallelujah.

Now, hallelujahs are good. It's going to take more than that. Because your hallelujah is acceptable only to the degree that you're laying your life down.

It's like, oh, one preacher I heard one time, he was so funny. He goes, you know, Christians don't talk. They don't tell lies, but they sure sing them every Sunday.

We'll sing all sorts of things. Sometimes I am just afraid of you. You'll be singing things and going, I don't know if I'd say that or not.

You're making some pretty big claims. Lord, I'll follow you anywhere. Be careful.

He just might take you up on it. Your spiritual act of worship is giving your life away to Christ. This word spiritual can also be translated probably more strongly into reasonable.

It's the only reasonable thing to do. Think about it is the only thing reasonable to do. First of all, it's not reasonable to lay down your life for a man.

It's not reasonable to follow a man. You follow a man. Congratulations.

You're in a cult. All men are liars. All men are cowards.

Sister, you don't have to say amen on that one so much. You're right, though. It just hurts me.

I'm just glad you said it instead of my wife. But it's true. I mean, we are so frail.

Look, I mean, you're really going to follow somebody who sometimes gets angry because they can't tie his shoes. You're going to follow a man. It's unreasonable.

Follow Jesus Christ, the incarnate son of God, who laid down his life, defeated death, rose from the dead and ascended at the right hand and is king as we speak. That's not unreasonable at all. It's not unreasonable.

As a matter of fact, it'd be unreasonable to do any other thing. I was speaking one time. I was in this little cafe in Lima, Peru, and I just finished some language classes.

And I was sitting around with a few Peruvians and and this guy and his girlfriend. And I'll never forget this. She said I was talking to him about the Lord and she kind of did the woman at the well thing on me.

Tried to change the direction of the conversation from her to someone else. And she said, well, you know, I understand what you're saying. That brother of mine, though, he's totally unreasonable.

He's an atheist. He doesn't believe in God like me. And I said, well, actually, I have a lot more respect for your brother than I do for you.

She said, what do you mean? He's very logical. He's reasonable in what he's doing. He said, well, what do you mean? Well, your brother says there is no God and he lives like there is no God.

That's reasonable. He's wrong. But at least there's a train of logic here.

You say there is no you say there is a God. And yet you do not seek him, do not desire to know his will. And even if you knew it, have no intentions in submitting yourself to that will.

Now, that is unreasonable. It's your spiritual or reasonable service of worship. Now, verse two, and do not be conformed to this world.

Literally do not be made out of the same mold. From which the world comes now, what is the world? You know, there's books worth of definitions on this word, but I think it would just come down to this. Any idea, attitude, thought, style, tradition that would contradict the nature and will of God.

That would oppose what we know about God's nature and oppose what we know about God's will. Do not be influenced. Do not be shaped by any thought or attitude of culture or tradition or any other thing.

That would put you in opposition to the person and will of God. Now, I've got news for you. You live in a fallen world and at least most of you are awake for about 16 hours a day.

You spend 16 hours a day in a fallen world that is constantly influencing you. Now, some of it you can avoid. Television, things like that.

And you should avoid more. Some things you simply cannot avoid. Some of you, in your jobs, you have to put up with horrendous immoral things and immoral people who are always challenging you.

Who are always trying to influence you. Who are always trying to see you fall. The Bible doesn't say that's good or bad.

The Bible is just saying it's a fact. We live in a fallen world that is going to influence you. A culture that's going to influence you much more than you realize.

You are so much more influenced by your culture than you know. And so am I. We are. I could give you a million illustrations to show you that you are much more influenced by your culture.

Let me just give you an example. You take a family that comes over from Mexico. They come over from Mexico.

Okay? Look at how the first generation of that family lives. The ideals they have about family. About saving money.

About working hard. About all this stuff. Good stuff.

Strong stuff. Stuff that builds countries. Stuff that builds societies.

Stuff that promotes family. You just take a look at that. And then look at the next generation.

The children of those people who came over. And then by the time you get at least to the third generation, they're all acting just like Americans. Think about that.

How quickly we are influenced by our surroundings. Let me just give you an example. I know that the women will hate me on this one.

I'm not trying to be a chauvinist or anything. But you got me, so I'm getting you guys back. It's this.

Just think about this. And this applies to men. And I'm not saying that I'm preaching against mixed bathing or anything like that.

I just want to point out a fact to you. What Christians wear to the beach. If someone had dressed that way 65 years ago, the secular authorities would have either thrown them in jail or put them in an asylum.

Is that not true? I want you to think about this just for a moment. Think of it. Don't get angry or anything.

Just think about what I'm saying because it is true. Lost people would not portray themselves in public. It would have been an absolute disgrace to them.

But Christians now do it freely. Now, don't say I'm preaching against this or for this. No, it's just true.

And it's just if in 65 years, our culture has been. Christian culture has been this influenced by the world. What's it been like in 2000 years? See how much your culture.

Messes with you. We think that just because we go to church, just because we read the Bible, some that the culture really doesn't have a grip on us and that we're really not conformed to it. That is not true.

It is a cultural war out there. At least that's what some call it. In reality, it's a spiritual war.

A spiritual war. Now, do not be conformed. That's a command.

You know, so many times we're into all this psychology about, well, you know, maybe I need to try this. No, God just looks at you and says, don't do it. What part of don't do it don't you understand? Just don't.

It's a powerful thing. It really is. When you begin to realize something as a Christian, I can say no.

I really can. You see, the secular world, secular psychology, the only thing they want to ever teach you to do is to cope. To cope and mope and mourn.

Just cope. God doesn't. God wants you to be transformed and victorious.

Now, I have to be careful. I use that word victorious because for many people in this city, it means that you're never going to be sick. You're always going to be wealthy and everything's going to go great.

That's not what I mean. Victorious. When I mean victorious, I mean trusting in Christ and being conformed to his image.

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed. From this word in Greek we get metamorphosis. Be metamorphosized.

It is not just. You need to understand something. Christianity, because it has been taught in America for so long to be nothing more than a human decision.

Salvation is a human decision. Therefore, your growth in Christ is a human decision. Salvation is a human decision that's optional.

You can choose. Therefore, sanctification is a human decision that's optional and you can choose. That's not what Scripture is really teaching us.

Salvation is a supernatural work of God by which the very heart of a person is changed and they become a new creature. And that work of salvation is not just past tense. I have been saved.

I am being saved. And one day I will be saved. I was justified, made legally right before God.

The moment I believed in Jesus, I am now being sanctified. And everyone who has truly been justified will be truly sanctified. And it is a supernatural work of God.

He who began a good work in you will finish it. He will not go halfway. He will do it.

It will bring about a supernatural transformation. We're being transformed from glory to glory. You say, well, none of that's a reality in my life.

Then be afraid. It could be you do not know him. Even worse, he does not know you.

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed. By the renewing of your mind. One of the hardest things in America.

One of the reasons why we've got such a mess that we've got in this Christendom in America, with everybody preaching everything you can imagine. Let me give you the history of how we got there. Around the turn of last century.

There was an influx of liberalism, terrible liberalism. Most of it coming from Germany and from Europe. Higher criticism attacking Scripture, destroying it, saying it's not.

It's not anything to be believed. It's archaic ideas of wasted people and on and on and on and on and on. And some of the greatest seminaries in America became.

The proponents of all these lies. Now, what happened? Well, seminaries and things like that are taken over by ungodly, unbelieving religious people, which are about the worst people on the face of the earth. And true Christians withdrew.

But in withdrawing, they reacted. Our theology is not supposed to be based on a reaction against something wrong. It's supposed to be based on Scripture.

And this is the idea that Christians started holding dear. They made it almost their motto. We don't want none of that theology stuff.

We don't want none of that doctrine stuff. We just want Jesus. You know, we don't want to deal with the minds of the Spirit.

And there became this great divorce between the mind of the Christian and the supposed spirit life of the Christian. Well, you got Jesus in your head, but you don't have him in your heart. That's an absurdity.

It really is. You can say it. It sounds good, but it means nothing.

You see, the Bible teaches that although there are people teaching false things in the name of academics, that the mind is essential in godliness. The mind is essential in Christianity. You don't disengage the mind in order to be spiritual.

It begins in the mind. As a man thinks, so is he. It begins in renewing our mind.

You're in a world 16 hours a day that is telling you lies. Influencing you towards ungodliness. If you are not in the Word of God, renewing your mind, you are in trouble.

It usually occurs that young men will come to my office no matter where I am, and it's always with the same problem. Problems with their thought life. And if we all were honest, that's where everything begins.

Problems in our thought life. Even if it's not something immoral about the opposite sex, it's always problems in our thought life. Whether it is depression, anger, bitterness, whatever it is, it all comes back to thinking on biblical things.

And I'll always ask him, I say, Well, how much time do you spend watching television? How much time do you spend going to the mall? How much time do you spend here and there? And how much time do you spend in the Word? It's a no-brainer, son. It's a no-brainer. You're allowing, you're presenting your members to unrighteousness, to become members of unrighteousness, but you're not presenting yourself to God and His Word to become holy.

Your mind is full of all these things because this is all it gets. Garbage in, garbage out. We must renew our mind.

Now let me just stop here for a second and just hit a problem over the head that I know is a problem in most people's lives here. I'm not a prophet or the son of a prophet. It's just been around for a while.

I know this is your problem. You don't know how to start studying the Bible. And you'll start studying it and become so discouraged, you won't even know what to do anymore.

And then you'll make another great New Year's resolution to start reading from Genesis to Revelation, get to Leviticus, and you'll wear yourself out and you give up again. Let me tell you the most important thing you could do with the Word of God. Read it for enjoyment.

Read the thing systematically from Genesis to Revelation over and over and over again and not being discouraged about what you do not understand. Begin in Genesis and read through the book. And if you get to something like Leviticus, now I'm going to sound a little sacrilegious here, please understand me.

I'm not. I'm just being truthful. When you get to Leviticus or Numbers and you get to some of that stuff and you're thinking, man, this really is just bogging me down, then do this until you get to another part that really interests you and then keep going.

Now you say, now hold on. The Bible is the inspired Word of God. I've gone through jungles believing that truth, so don't challenge me on that.

What I'm telling you is this. There are some things in the Bible that I read through a bit quickly and I'll tell you why. I don't really understand it.

It's not really right now a great need in my life to understand it. And one day under the sovereignty of God, if I'm faithful and He will be faithful, He'll bring me back to those places when I'm older. He'll show me maybe something of what they mean.

But right now, my little boy has no business studying the Pythagorean theorem or quantum mechanics or anything else like that. If you will take the New Testament, let me give you an example. I did this when I was first converted.

If you would take the New Testament, begin in Matthew and read all the way to the end and write out just no more than one phrase, everything you don't understand, like you get to Matthew 1.21 or something and say, well, I don't understand this. I don't understand what this means. Okay, keep going.

When you get done, you will have two or three notebooks just with one line questions. And here's what you do. The second time you read through the New Testament, you know what's going to happen? You're going to answer some of your questions.

You're going to get some more questions. You're going to answer some of your questions. And then go back through again.

You're going to answer some more questions and still have some other questions that come forth. And you're going to see that you begin to literally answer your questions with the Bible because one of the principles of Bible hermeneutics is that the Bible is the best commentator of itself. Just read the thing.

Just read it. Don't worry about whether you catch it, how much you know, don't know. Just read it over and over and over again.

When I go to seminaries and speak from a seminary pulpit, I plead with the seminary students just to read their Bibles. When I go to a pastor's conference, I plead with them, make it a daily, lifelong practice to read the Bible systematically from Genesis to Revelation over and over again and read it to enjoy it, to drink it in. I know I've got to run a lot of rabbits because it's my last day.

Let me share something with you about Bible study and prayer. There are times that I pray with my boots on. There are times I pray with my boots off.

There are times I study the Bible with my boots on. And there are times I study the Bible with my boots off. There are times I am with believers with my boots on.

And there are times I'm with believers with my boots off. Now what do I mean? There are times when prayer is nothing but hard, terrible work. I am on my knees and I am interceding on behalf of people, ministries, things such as that.

It is work. You see, many of you think, well, you know, if I'm going to pray, I've got to enjoy it. No, prayer is work.

Sometimes even that work is enjoyable, but you've got to see it as work. I pray with my boots on. I intercede for this church.

I intercede for people. I intercede for the mission. I intercede for my family.

When I'd rather be asleep, when I'd rather just be in bed, when I'd rather go walk in the woods. No, on your knees with the boots on, working. But if that's all prayer was, it would be a terrible thing.

I pray with my boots on, but I also pray with my boots off. Not interceding, not fighting, not seeking with a sword for the kingdom to advance, not rebuking demons, but simply sat back in my chair or walking down a lane or in the night watch with the Lord, just beholding His presence and enjoying Him. If you don't have both of those, you'll lose whatever you have.

It's the same way with the Word. Sometimes there are passages of Scripture and they've got to be wrangled over and fought over and you're studying and you're praying and you're dissecting every word and diagramming every sentence and you're going to all the commentaries and you're calling people and you feel like if you have to get one more thought in your head to understand this text, your head's going to explode. It is work and it wears you out.

I've worked in hay crews, dug sewer lines. I've just about done everything you can do on a farm. And I want to tell you something, nothing makes me more tired than fighting with Scripture.

But there are other times when we approach Scripture with our boots off. It's a love letter from God. It's something to be enjoyed, to be read, to be memorized, to be meditated upon.

Sometimes when we're with Christians, it's hard work. Have your boots on. There are many needs.

A lot of work to do here. But then if you never pull your boots off, you never get your feet washed. It's time to have your boots off and just enjoy one another.

Have a good time. Renewing of your mind through the Word of God and prayer. I know guys that come out of seminaries, PhD's, and they've made an A in absolutely everything they've ever done.

I wouldn't let them in this pulpit because they don't pray. They're just mechanical little technicians who know everything and know nothing at the same time. It is not just about knowing the Word of God.

It is knowing the God of the Word through prayer. It's not just knowing His book. It's knowing the One who wrote it.

Now, do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind so that you may prove what the will of God is. People are always asking me, Brother Paul, how do you know the will of God? Well, here's the problem most people have. They're not really students of the Bible.

They're not really renewing their mind in the Bible. And the only time they go to the Bible when there is a crisis in their life in which they need to know what is God's will. So they begin to look for it in Scripture specifically.

And then when that doesn't work, sometimes they kind of just flip through the Bible and go like this. It's all backwards. You put the cart before the horse.

How do we know the will of God? By living a lifestyle of renewing our mind in the will of God. By renewing our mind in the written Word of God, a heart renewed, a mind renewed, our discernment greatly increases so that the will of God almost becomes a kind of a natural thing that you just flow through. So the only way to live according to the will of God is first of all to be renewing your mind in the Word of God as a practice, as a habitual thing.

You say, I'm too busy. Then you're too busy. To renew your mind.

Now what is the will of God? It is good, acceptable, and perfect. Let's draw three, like three fence posts. Good, acceptable, and perfect.

And let's build a fence connecting each post. What have we got? A wall of protection around you. You say, is it the will of God for my life? Well, first of all, if it is, it'll be good.

And the word means that more of this idea of leading to a prosperous or a healthy spiritual condition. If it does not lead to your spiritual health and your spiritual prosperity, it is not the will of God. You say, well, what about martyrdom? That will make you pretty spiritual pretty quick.

That could be the will of God. What about terrible trials? Could be the will of God. But it is not the will of God for something to come into your life that's going to devastate you spiritually.

It's going to cause you to stagnate. Young people, listen to me. When you're carried away by emotions rather than the word of God, when you're young and immature in Christ and you act foolishly and you begin to get involved with a person who does not lead you into greater godliness, it is not the will of God because it is not good.

It's going to be good. What else does it say? Acceptable. Acceptable to a fallen culture? No, acceptable to a holy God.

The only thing that really matters is not what Grandma said, Grandpa said or anybody else said. Not what your best friends say or the news media say or the greatest minds of our time. The only thing that really matters is what does God say.

If it doesn't line up with God's Word, it's not God's will. And then also, which is perfect. What does that mean? I think the greatest definition I can find for this or illustration comes from among my own contemporaries, the ministers.

It's this. I have heard so many ministers say, I've got to sacrifice my family for the sake of doing God's will. That is a lie straight out of the pit of hell.

What do I mean? God has given you commands, sir, about your family. He's given you commands. And the law cannot be broken.

He's given you commands about your family. He's given you commands about your ministry. You do not have to break the commands of God with regard to your family in order to fulfill the commands of God with regard to your ministry.

Because if you do, there is imperfections with God, and we might as all just quit. God's law, His will, is perfect. It means you can get everything done you need to get done in 24 hours.

Let's go back to the young people again. I hate to keep picking on you. I love you.

But this idea of missionary dating. Well, God wants him to be saved. That's good.

Now, you're going to accomplish God's will by breaking God's will, by entering into a relationship with someone who not only are they not mature, they're not even a Christian. You see? God's will doesn't work that way. It's perfect all the way around.

The will of God is never the lesser of two evils. It's always perfect. Now, I want to read one text to you to kind of finish up my time here.

And it's this. Now, these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the Word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so. Now, what does this mean? There are two extremes in the Christian life.

And I'm talking about the man who is going to follow me in this pulpit. I've been here for three months. It's not very long.

I have no claim on you whatsoever. But just as a brother to a brother, I want to tell you something about who's ever going to be the teaching preaching elder. There are two extremes.

One, here we see, they receive the Word with great eagerness. I have met people that literally they are the perfect psychology for cult. They will receive anything eagerly.

They will amen anything. Anything preached, anything in direction, anything anywhere, they'll amen it if the person who says it can say it with enough power. They'll receive anything eagerly.

Hook, line, and sinker. In one of the business meetings here, I was terrified and I'll tell you why. Some men stood up and spoke and people applauded them.

Other men stood up and spoke directly the opposite and the same people applauded them. Do you receive something just because someone says it with force? Just because their personal appearance seems to demand some sort of following? Receive the Word eagerly. And that is all.

That's an extreme. The other is receive the Word with cynicism and sarcasm. You don't ever receive the Word.

That's the other extreme. People who just sit back and just won't receive anything from anybody. And also people who will look at the preacher and if he wears nice clothes and he speaks eloquently and he seems to be a sharp fellow, they will follow him.

But if he comes up in the pulpit and his demeanor is meek, almost embarrassing, and he speaks trembling, and his words are not that strong, they'll reject him before they even hear him. You would reject the Apostle Paul. The Apostle Paul would not be able to preach in hardly any churches in America today.

Tradition tells us he was about 4'6 or 7'. Had the biggest nose you've ever seen in your life. Bald-headed, bow-legged.

He had malaria. Possibly pus was coming out of his eyes and he spoke with trembling. Would he be an elder candidate for you? Well, you know, appearance is important.

To whom? To whom? We want to be proud of our preacher. No, you want to be proud of your God. No.

Now what is the proper way? To receive the Word with eager. With eager hearts. To receive it eagerly, yes.

To be in a sense like that childlike in which you're going, yes, I'll hear this. And then what? It says here, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so. Is this so? Is this true? Is it? Well, let's look in Scripture.

Well, how should we look in Scripture? I mean, after all, this guy's gone to seminary. The devil goes to seminary. I went to seminary.

What's that mean? I've had men, mountain men in jungles of Peru, in the Andes Mountains, dirty, barely literate, unshaven, wearing as sandals, rubber they've cut off of old truck tires, and yet sat at their feet and

learned more about God than I ever imagined available. I'm going to tell you to do something that I'm afraid will cause some of you to leave, and that is this. Assume the spiritual responsibility for your own lives.

Don't wait around for a Moses to lead you out of here. Don't believe. Don't be cynical.

Don't be mean-spirited. Don't just pull back from everyone. Don't doubt.

Most certainly don't gossip. But at the same time, listen to what you hear. Judge from the Word of God.

You have the Spirit of God. Many of you are confused about the leadership in this church. What does it mean, elders? Well, I want to tell you, I've worked with these men, and I'm not a flatterer.

That's what's got me in most of my trouble throughout my life. But you have some men who are working as elders. They have already told you more than I think I could have told you about themselves.

This is what was said. We were appointed as elders. We need to learn a lot of things about eldership.

We need in our own hearts to determine are we the men? There's a need for other men to join the elder group. There's a need for the congregation to examine and to determine and to affirm. That's the direction you're headed in.

And also, biblically, to have elders does not mean that you have five, six, ten dictators. It means there are men who must pray, who must seek to lead, who must make recommendations, who must give time, more time than you might ever think ever available to making and leading the church. But it is always the church that affirms and asks questions and seeks to know.

Everything with transparency. There is nothing to be hidden here. There's no reason to hide anything.

Completely open. Now, I want to share with you something. If a man does come and the elders see him as a great possibility and recommend him, and if you just say yes, even though you don't agree, then you deserve just what you get.

You do. But if you will respect the men who have been put here so far as elders, if you will respect them, give them their due. And then when men are recommended, and other men are recommended to be elders and things like that, if you have questions, you ask them.

You determine, you affirm as a congregation, because this is a congregational church. When things like, what are we going to do in missions and what are we going to do here and there? You just don't do things. You investigate.

You're responsible. So many of you have come to me and said, well, if I just give my money, that's all that matters. What they do with it.

No! It's like me walking up to a heretic and giving him money and saying, well, what do you do? You are responsible to know what's going on in this church. You are responsible to be a part of what's going on in this church. You're responsible to follow with all your heart and with appreciation that which your conscience and the Word of God allows you to follow.

And when you have problems, you don't run around gossiping, you don't run around sulking, you don't run around saying, no one will listen to me. You go with respect and with love and with confidence and you say, I don't understand. I want an explanation.

You have to assume, church, the responsibility of spiritual men and women. And it is a joyous thing. If God had called me to be the pastor here, and He did not, if He had called me to be the pastor here, I would have enjoyed serving alongside of the staff we have.

I would have enjoyed serving alongside of the men right now that are functioning as elders. I would have considered it a privilege. I would have also seen the need to be praying and looking towards other men, gifted men in the congregation.

Not only for elders, but for deacons. Of realizing that there are many, many gifted people. There are many things that can be done here.

And I would encourage you with no authority except the authority of a brother to assume the spiritual responsibility for your life, for your home, and for this church. And to see God raise this church up to be a tremendous, tremendous thing. You want a man in this pulpit who is going to, first of all, have the characteristics of the one great teacher, Jesus Christ, in meekness, humility, the character set out in 1 Timothy 3. I've gone to so many churches and preached one time and come down from the pulpit and someone says, you need to be our pastor.

And I go, are you kidding me? You know nothing about how I love my wife. You know nothing about how I raise my children. You know nothing about my finances.

You know nothing about my integrity. I speak well! The devil speaks well! The man that's going to be a preaching, teaching elder in this church has to be a man who is seeking in his heart to conform his life to 1 Timothy 3 and the characteristics laid out for an elder. And he won't be perfect.

I've sat down so many times debating on whether or not I was supposed to be here, but looking at 1 Timothy 3 and saying, Lord, do I even qualify to be an elder? Plato said the only one that really was worthy of governing is the one who thought himself unworthy of governing. Don't bring a hot shot in here. Bring a man who seeks to be conformed to the image of Christ and will tell you when he's not.

Who will speak with such power at times that you tremble, but also come before you weeping and say, pray for me! I'm not the man I ought to be. And a man who will go word by word, line by line, the Bible, and a man who does not have big visions. And what do I mean by that? I mean this right here.

I used to get so mad as a missionary when I would come home from the mission field and see pastors that didn't seem to care much about missions. Now I admire pastors like that. And I'll tell you why.

Pastoring is a full-time job. There are so many sheep here today that need to be pastored in a greater way than even this staff can do right now. If all the staff were to do it, if Robert and everybody else were just to drop everything that they're doing and seek to do nothing but pastoring 24 hours a day, it would take a couple of years to get this place pastored.

There are so many men out there with great big visions who want to use God's people to fulfill their vision. You want a man whose vision is Jesus Christ crucified and risen from the dead, and the only thing he can really think about are all the sheep that have been put under his care. And then God will also raise up men

who can be working in missions and people who can be working.

And he can preach from the pulpit on missions. But my dear friends, one of the reasons I did not come here is this. I am always looking to the further hill.

And you deserve more than that. You deserve more than a man who's looking at the Siberian Railway or Nepal. You deserve a man who's looking at the fact that you can't handle your teenage daughter anymore or your teenage son.

You need a man who's looking at the fact that your life is falling apart and he can't sleep because of it. That's what you want. You can get men in this pulpit that in one year will have this church with 2,000 people in it, and all of them will be broken.

Or you can get a man sent from God who loves you and that's it. You want to know the definition of a pastor? The illustration of a pastor? Isaiah 53. He carries the burdens of God's people.

He's broken over the burdens of God's people. He carries their sin. He's not esteemed.

He's not honored until the Great Shepherd comes back. Because I want to tell you something. I'm not just speaking to hear myself speak.

This is true. When the Great Shepherd comes back... I've done a lot of things. I've been a missionary.

I've been an evangelist. All sorts of things. The most difficult thing I have ever done in my life is not walking through a jungle being chased by terrorists.

The most difficult thing I've ever done in my life is pastor a small group of people. The highest honor that someone can have is that of a pastor elder. There has never been a man on the face of the earth famous for being a pastor.

There's never been a famous pastor. You say, now hold on, Brother Paul. That's not true.

Spurgeon was a pastor. He was famous. Was he famous for pastoring or famous for preaching? You get no fame out of being a pastor until the day the Great Shepherd returns.

And then you are honored above them all if you have been faithful. A man of integrity. A man of character.

A man who may not be the most eloquent. May not be the most pretty. But when your life is falling down all around you, He'll be the first one you call.

And He will be the first one there. You're here today and you don't know Christ. It's been kind of an unusual service.

A long service. Come talk. If your heart is burdened, come and talk.

We'll be up here. Me, the other ministers, elders, whoever. Have a lot of men, women in this church can tell you about Jesus.

If you have anything that you need to discuss, it's what we're here for. May God's blessing be upon you. And please, please, I just urge you to come back tonight.

It is just such a blessing. Such a wonderful blessing. The music, the arrangement.

Last night, spiritually I enjoyed it. Emotionally, I enjoyed it. My mind enjoyed it.

And the rhythms were just exciting. So I pray that you will come back. Robert, are you supposed to come down here or are you going to bungee jump from up there? Now that's something I would love to see.

I think we're going to have an offering time. And I'm going to turn this over, but God bless all of you. God bless all of you very, very much.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/16/SID16043.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/paul-washer/the-joy-of-giving-it-all-part-4/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net