

# The Pursuit of Life

by Robert B. Thompson

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*The sermon emphasizes that salvation is a continuous pursuit of knowing and gaining Christ, requiring daily commitment and self-denial.*

**Duration:** 1:18:00

**Scripture:** Romans 10:9-10

**Topics:** "Biblical Literacy", "Spiritual Discipline"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of reading and understanding the entire counsel of God rather than relying on isolated verses or passages. He specifically mentions the book of Romans and encourages the audience to read chapters 9, 10, and 11 in order to fully grasp the message of salvation. The speaker also acknowledges the challenges faced in America due to material enticements and highlights the need to resist worldly temptations. He concludes by referencing Philippians 3 and emphasizes the importance of knowing Christ, experiencing the power of his resurrection, and sharing in his sufferings.

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## Transcript

Tonight it is with great thanksgiving, Lord, for your wonderful love and your goodness to us. Lord, we're mindful of your faithfulness to us and the way you answer prayer. Keep us going, Lord.

Hallelujah. Blessed be your wonderful name. Lord, as we come unto you tonight, Lord, we pray for each family represented here.

We pray your blessing will be on them for health, for safety, Lord, and protect them in their homes and on the highway. God, we need your help. We need your protection, Lord, and we ask for it in Jesus' name.

As we continue, Lord, we need the Holy Spirit to guide us and to bring Jesus to each person as we have need. We thank you for the answer in Jesus' name. Amen.

Okay, I think we're in Philippians 3 tonight. We'll start with verse 4 of Philippians 3. Though I myself have reasons for such confidence, if anyone else thinks he has reason to put confidence in the flesh, I have more. Circumcised on the eighth day of the people of Israel of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews, in regard to the law, a Pharisee as for zeal, persecuting the church as for legalistic righteousness, faultless.

But whatever was to my prophet, I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. And that's a basic Christian position, and it takes you a while to get there. Whatever I accomplished, whatever I have to glory in is loss.

Why is it loss? Why? Why wouldn't that be an asset? It has all this religious upbringing. Larry? Because God's not interested in our... He's interested in redoing everything. He's got to die and become new in Christ.

Exactly. It was things that were not wrought in Christ. Anything in our life that's not wrought in Christ is temporary, is suspect, and is sometimes a beachhead for the enemy.

And so, little by little, everything in our life that's worthwhile has to be brought down to death and then raised until it becomes part of Christ. And once it becomes part of Christ, then it's ours forever. And it's ours forever.

That's really the resurrection, what's going on there. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. Now, how does that differ from the way we usually consider being saved? How does it differ? Well, here... Hi, Hal.

How are you doing, man? Yeah, alright. I see you're just sitting up there like my dog Bear does when she's hungry. She sits on the back stoop.

She's a setting pointer, Hal. She sits on the back stoop and points at the kitchen, is what she does. Yes, Larry? As a Christian, we view salvation as a change of vocation.

And Paul is talking about a change of his knowledge and knowing Christ. Isn't it true that you get the impression sometimes that all we have to do to be saved is to confess with our mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in our heart that God has raised Him from the dead. And basically, that's all there is to it.

And here's a man, toward the end of his career, one of the greatest Christians in history, and he's still trying to know Christ. Now, I mean, this is supposed to be the way we all are. We can see when we get down a little bit later, Paul says, if you think any different from this, you're off.

We've got to start considering salvation as a pursuit of something, a pressing towards something, rather than a ticket that we possess. It's a whole different concept. I mean, we might say to someone, you know, in church, do you know Christ? Oh, yes.

Oh, I know Christ. Yes, I was saved 35 years ago. You know, as a ticket.

Not, well, I know Him, but I'm pressing on today that I might know Him more. That pressing on, that pushing on. Once we stop that, we begin to die, because the currents are so strong that you can't hang in the middle.

I mean, you're either pressing on or floating back. One or the other. And so, they say, well, when does this stop? When can I retire? Guess when? Exactly.

There's no retirement mentality when it comes to our salvation. Our vocation, yes, but not our salvation. Boy, we're in there hanging every minute.

We're growing every minute in the knowledge of Christ. If Paul didn't know Christ by this time in his life, what in the world? It's true of us. So, there's more of Christ to learn about.

How many believe that? There's more of Christ than I have and than you have. And as long as God has granted us breathing space on the earth, then His purpose is that we'll know more of Christ. That's all there is to it.

There's no letting up. There's no letting up. I can see many horizons in my life that need to be pursued, and I'm sure you do too.

I mean, there's just no end to this thing. As Christ gets bigger every day, He knows everything from algebra to architecture. I mean, He knows everything.

In Him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and we've just scratched the surface. Alright, he says, For whose sake I have lost all things. Now, that's what Jesus said about being a disciple.

Unless you deny yourself, take up your cross, hate your own life, you cannot be my disciple. And Paul literally had, as a righteous Jew, he had given up his position in Israel, given up his opportunity to be rich, be highly esteemed. I mean, this man was a jailbird.

Given up comfort, given up everything you think of. He says, and I consider them rubbish, garbage, nothing. Not thinking about, oh, I could be back up in Tarsus with my grandkids, teaching them to rot.

No. It's all rubbish. There's nothing there.

Guys, this is the normal Christian experience. Think of it. I think God is restoring His Word in these days.

And then he says something absolutely beyond belief. He says that I may gain Christ. Now, we know Paul was not a man given to churchy talk.

He was not a man given to religious niceties. Saying things because they sounded nice. He meant exactly what he was saying.

After all he had been through, he was still trying to gain Christ. Trying to gain Christ. So how do we get Christ? You see, our doctrine is accurate as far as it goes, but it doesn't go far enough.

We say to people, we quote Romans 10, 9, and 10. Right out of context, not realizing what Paul was saying to the Jews. Lift it out.

That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God has raised Him from the dead. Thou shalt be saved for what the heart man believes under righteousness, with the mouth confession of this man unto salvation. We don't know what went before.

We don't know what went afterward. You can't, I'll tell you something from experience. You can't say the whole thing in one sermon.

You can't say the whole thing in one essay. Sometimes people come into my essays cold, you know. And then they take out one sentence and say, what is this? Well, we've only put, Brian and Eddie have over 200 books online now.

And they're free to go and read them all for nothing. They take one sentence out of an essay, what is this? What do you mean by this? Well, you can't tell the whole story in one essay. You can't tell the whole story in one sermon.

You've got to take the whole counsel of God. First of all, you'd have to read the 10th chapter of Romans. Then it would help to read the 9th and 11th chapters.

And then finally the book of Romans so that you can understand what Paul was driving at that point. He didn't say that's all there is to salvation as is evidenced by a verse in Philippians. He was discussing one point and he was reacting against Jews.

You want to realize that in Romans. He was talking about Jews and people influenced by Jews who were trying to make the transition from Moses to Christ. Another example of that one-liner thing is where in one place it says that we must be baptized in Jesus' name.

Well, a whole denomination has been built on that. Just forget everything else the Bible says, there it is. Actually, when that was said, he was contrasting the baptism of John with Jesus.

And he's saying, well, you were baptized on the water to John. Now you have to be baptized in Jesus' name. But if you lift that out of context of what the man is talking about, you get yourself another denomination.

Everybody has to be re-baptized. So, if you're going to cut a straight course in the word of truth, you can't do it with a promise box. Promise boxes are not trustworthy.

Because in them they have the goodness of God, but they do not have the severity of God. Because they know that it would give you indigestion. So if you're going to sit down and eat and they pass the promise box around, you won't find anything except the goodness of God.

Because nobody's going to sell promise boxes when they've got part of the severity of God. We don't want to hear that today. So, it's fine, and the sisters pray so much that these promises they give are almost like oracles.

They usually hit the button. But it's not the way to approach the New Testament. The Old Testament is different because it's little glimpses of the kingdom hidden in a bunch of other stuff.

And it takes the Spirit of God to flash on it and make it live. But the New Testament is written in cold blood. I mean, Paul was a logical man.

And even though his hand was guided unerringly by the Holy Spirit, nonetheless everything he says makes sense. And when you read the whole book of Romans, then read Romans 10, 9 and 10, you see, well, he isn't saying that's a ticket. He isn't saying that's a ticket.

It's like taking verses out of chapter 5 and then ignoring chapter 6. You can't do that. All you do is get shipwrecked. You arrest the scripture to your own destruction.

So, we have to recognize that in some instances certain scriptures have been taken out of context and made into a ticket. But the true Christian life is spending our whole life trying to not only know Christ, but gain Christ. So it's not for the fainthearted.

And there's no need to be discouraged. Because Christ will bring through the weakest person provided their heart is right. Not in the smug arrogance that we have today.

We know it all and we're eternally saved. The Lord won't deal with that. The rich he sends empty away.

But anybody can look at us and say, oh God, I'm so far what he's talking about, I'm discouraged. No, no, no, no. The Bible says in several places the Lord will bring forth victory in the weak.

Yes, Larry? Could you explain the difference between knowing Christ and gaining Christ? I don't think here there's any real difference. He's got it all together. And Christ, I'll tell you what it is, Larry, I'll tell you what it is.

The answer, I think, to your question is found in the first chapter of the Gospel of John. Because it presents something that is not true in the physical realm. And this is what it says.

It says, in him was life, and the life was the light of men. Which means that the knowledge of Christ, the light, comes through his life. See, the life is the light.

Now that's not true in the physical realm that we live in. But in the spiritual realm, the way you understand Christ is by eating Christ. So knowledge and gaining run together at that point.

As you gain Christ, you gain him, you're partaking of him. You're partaking of his body and blood. Gaining him into your life.

Gaining the resurrection into your life is what you're doing. You're gaining it into you. You're laying hold on it.

And that becomes light. It becomes knowledge. The knowledge of God does not come through the mind.

It comes through Christ. I am the way. Not I show the way.

I am the way. And when you have him, you have the way. You may not even understand the way, but you have it.

That's not true in the physical world. You can't say, I am the way to Escondido. You know, people lock you up for that kind of talk.

You say, I can show you the way to Escondido. I can tell you the way. I can give you a map, but I can't say, I am the way to Escondido.

But Christ says, I am the way to the Father. You don't get to the Father by taking an airplane. You get to the Father by receiving Christ and coming through Christ.

And so, I think, in that case, they run together. The gaining of Christ results in the knowledge of Christ. So, we lay hold upon.

See, what we're talking about here is the resurrection and eternal life, as we see as we go on. So, in order to gain, the resurrection has to be attained. You attain to the resurrection.

There's something that has to be attained. We know from John 5.28 and 29 that all that are in the grave shall come forth. So, when we talk about, and then he says, they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of judgment.

That's John 5.28 and 29. So, we see then that there's resurrection, and then there's resurrection. There's resurrection to judgment, and then there's resurrection to life.

So, when Paul says he's trying to attain the resurrection, he doesn't mean the resurrection per se. He means that half of the resurrection that pertains to life. Because there's no attaining to the resurrection per se.

Everybody's going to be raised. But to be raised to life has to be attained. You have to gain Christ.

It's not enough to make a profession of faith. Your profession of faith is the beginning of the path to life. I am the way, the truth, and the life.

And he says, Christ said the way to life, the gate is small, and the way is compressed that leads to life. Eternal life, guys, is not a legal state. And it's often viewed that way.

It's a legal state. I've accepted Christ, so I am viewed as having eternal life. Eternal life is Christ himself.

I am the life. And the moment you accept him, you have to pursue him. And as it says, the gate is small.

You can't bring all your junk with you. And the way is narrow. Literally, the way is compressed.

The best analogy I know of is an electric current. And the more resistance, when you affect an electric current with resistance, you cause heat, and it affects the flow of current, depending on how much or how less resistance there is. And that's exactly the way it is to life.

And everything is fighting against you. Your personality is fighting against you. The world is fighting against you.

Satan is fighting against you. Your mind is fighting against you. Sometimes the church is fighting against you.

Fears, doubts, everything you can think of, they're all against you. Straight is the gate. Narrow is the gate.

And compressed is the way that leads to life. So, life is not a ticket. It's not a profession of something.

The profession orients us to begin the process of pursuing Christ. And it's a lifelong pursuit. And salvation is never yesterday.

You can't say, I was saved yesterday. Salvation is always today. Today is the day of salvation.

And the moment it becomes yesterday, you're losing ground. Now, yes, Emily. Just maybe saying the same thing, that in that one sentence, where it says, according to that I count all things to be loved in view of the... To me, these are key words, surpassing value.

The value of knowing Christ then allows me to make a decision. A lot of people that believe in Christ don't know Christ. But the value of knowing Christ, I see Paul here says, that value of knowing Christ Jesus, it gives me the choice of saying, yes, I will suffer the loss of all things so that I can gain you.

That's how I see that. Absolutely. Puts our priorities in order.

Absolutely. Now, do you see the picture, do you see the difference between viewing salvation as a ticket and viewing salvation as a race that you run? You see the difference there? There's all the difference in the world in your attitude. Because if you get up in the morning and say, I'm saved, hallelujah, now what do I do today? That's one thing.

But if you get up in the morning and say, I'm in the pursuit of life. I'm pursuing life. Straight as the gate and narrow as the way that leads to life.

And few there be that find it. And it's so true. There are many Christians that are oblivious to the fact that they have only begun, they have only been authorized to begin the journey.

I'm pressing on the upward way. Hallelujah. Alright, then he said, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law.

Paul was always reacting against the law. We have a hard time as Gentiles understanding Paul because we think what he was reacting against was his own efforts to serve God. But this whole thing is an effort.

He wasn't reacting against an effort to serve God. He was reacting against the law. And this is true in Galatians, it's true in Romans.

And that's one of the greatest misunderstandings there is in Christian thinking is that Paul, by works, meant righteous behavior. By works, Paul meant the law. Here was a man, a Pharisee, who died in the will of a Jew, and everything in Paul's life was the Torah, was the law.

Everything. From his toenails to the last hair on his head was the law. That was Paul, the law.

And that God would use a man like that to make the transition from the law to the grace that's in Jesus Christ is incredible. It's absolutely incredible. So this keeps cropping up, and I want you to be sensitive to that.

Because otherwise, when Paul says that I may know the righteousness of God, which is by faith, we automatically say, well, that means I just believe. That's not what he's talking about, obviously. He's not talking about just believing when he talks about his whole life is pressing toward Christ.

He means, I'm not trying to gain it by observing the law, the laws of leprosy, the kosher laws, the laws concerning slaves, and the Ten Commandments, circumcision, the feasts of the Lord. He says, I'm not into that. I'm not trying to buy God with those things.

I'm deriving my righteousness by pursuing Christ with all my might. Big difference there. Then interpret that as meaning there's nothing I do but just say I'm saved because I believe.

How many can see the difference in that? It isn't even related. We have just misunderstood Paul because we don't see that he keeps saying the law, the law. We read it, not having a righteousness of my own, period.

Meaning there's nothing I do. That's not what he's talking about. He's talking about not doing as a good Jew does, which is forgetting about God and putting his nose in the Torah and doing what it says, without faith or anything else, just earning righteousness by the law.

Yes. In Galatians 2, Paul says, on the contrary, they saw that I had been entrusted with the task of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles just as Peter had been to the Jews. And yet, it really strikes me as odd that most of Paul's letters are dealing with the issue of the law, which is not a Gentile phenomenon, and yet Peter, whose ministry was to the Jews, really didn't write much of anything regarding the law and the revelation of transition.

Well, we don't know what went on in the missionary activity. It doesn't describe much about Peter in the book of Acts, so we don't know what he did. And all these books like Romans, Philippians, Ephesians, and all these are Gentile churches.

So, Paul was given to the Gentiles, but he had to explain it in terms of the law because even the Gentiles, if they were devout at all, were affected by the Jews, and by Judaist teachers, and by the synagogue. And of course, really, Paul probably went from city to city dealing with small groups of people, and that's why I think when he signed off in some of his letters, I think those people he mentioned was everybody in the group. If you picture him going around and ministering to 5,000, like Peter on the day of Pentecost, it's most likely it was a very small home group.

They were all home groups. There were no churches built until the 3rd century. They were all home groups, and they were in peril of their life a good deal at the time.

Remember how when Peter came, the door was locked? He went open saying, we have services here tonight. The door was locked because it was viewed with suspicion by the Romans. So, his real ministry was not what he did.

I mean, today, look it, the seven churches of Asia are all in Turkey today, which is a Muslim country. And yet that's where Paul did his work. That wasn't where it was.

It was in his epistles. And he never knew how God was going to use those letters unless he was told, and those were the words which he said, it's not lawful to utter. That's possible that God told him, Paul, your letters are going to become Scripture.

And Paul said, I heard things that are not lawful to utter. That may have been what he heard. I don't know.

But in any case, Paul, out of the burden and the irritations that happened with writing letters, he didn't know they'd be included in the Tanakh as part of the Bible. He had no way of knowing that. But that's, but it was Paul's reasoning and defying Peter and the other apostles and taking on the whole world, you know, and feeling guilty because he had held the coats of those who stoned Stephen and all this bearing down on him.

And then every place he went, there was a relative there, somebody that he had thrown their relative in prison. They sent all of this, the Roman government, and everything else, bad eyesight, and trying to write these epistles. That's the way God shakes the world.

That's just the way he shakes the world. It's a marvel, isn't it? But what I feel to impress on you tonight is this idea that it's a daily, a daily pressing. It isn't that there's something out there that you know you're never going to gain.

That isn't the point. It's the struggle itself that God is after. He's not saying, now, out there there's a gold medal and I want you to go for that gold medal.

And you think, man, I don't even know how to swim, let alone compete in the Olympics. See? That isn't the point. It's in the struggle.

All you have to do is be faithful with the challenge that you're meeting in any given day. There's no thing out there, standard, that you have to meet. Overcoming is a daily struggle.

It's not trying to meet a standard and thinking, I'm not even making it, I'm slipping back, I'm not making it today, I'm worse off than I was yesterday. Because you're going to feel like that a lot of times. But God isn't asking for you, you know, to be training as an Olympic swimmer or runner.

He's interested in the struggle because in that struggle you're exchanging your Adamic life for His life and that's all that He's required. When God begins to warn us is when we get involved in the world and are not praying, not reading our Bible, not setting our affection on things above, not doing what we were commanded. Then we're slipping back.

We don't realize it. Because Satan doesn't tell you right away that you're slipping back. He lets it happen an inch at a time.

I mean, it's so slow you can't even tell it. So you've got to keep reminding yourself. That's why we have services.

It's to keep reminding us, reminding us who I am and what I'm doing. You're pushing. You've had challenges today.

You're going to have new challenges tomorrow. And you've got to meet them in Jesus. And there'll always be grace enough for the day.

There'll always be grace. There'll always be evil for the day. And there'll always be grace for the day.

There'll always be a way out. No matter how grim it seems. But it's in the struggle.

It's in the struggle. Even if it's ministry. Like in the case of Paul.

He may have thought, boy, I'm getting nowhere. As fast as I leave a place, in comes the Judaizers who wreck the whole thing. But that wasn't what God was after.

God was after what was happening inside of Paul. And he thought, well, and I'm going to use his epistles. But it wasn't as though Paul had to do something.

Except press on. Press on. That we have to do.

And it's getting increasingly difficult in America because of the material enticements. Not like we were living in some place barren, you know, holed up in a cave in Greece with a monk or something. Did you ever see those caves in Greece? They had to climb a ladder up those old guys that were living by themselves in a hole in a mountain way up.

Every so often they had to come down a ladder. Man, it would scare you to death. Yeah.

Well, I saw a picture in the Geographic where the old guy was climbing the ladder. He's an old guy. And this ladder was hanging over the side of a mountain.

I just went off the ground. It scared me to look at him. He's crawling up to his hole in the cave.

Well, that's one way of doing it. But we're stuck with the enticements of the world. And that's a battle.

He's battling up there. Don't you worry. He's battling up there in his cave, same as we are.

Alright, now. That I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having the righteousness of my own that comes from the law, that is, keeping Shabbat, keeping the feast days, keeping the mikvah bath, or whatever, I don't know. Do men do the mikvah bath? All the tzaddik.

No, I'm not gaining righteousness that way. I'm gaining righteousness by pursuing Christ. See, that's not keeping the law.

That's not a righteousness of the law. And the pursuit comes through faith. There's no other way it can come, because if you don't have faith, you don't have hope that your pursuing is going to accomplish anything, and so you quit pursuing.

So faith is faith that gives us hope that what we believe for, what we've set our hopes on, while it's invisible, is nevertheless secure in God. And that's what faith is. Our confidence, that though we can't see it, what we hope for is solid in God.

And that's how Paul was living. That's true faith, and it brings righteousness. It's not belief in doctrine.

It's an orientation to the way you live. What you hope for. Where your goals are.

What you're believing for. You can't see them, but I believe. But we're saved by hope.

Make sense? All right. The righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. I want to know Christ.

Now, he says something here. The power of his resurrection. We hear a lot today about power.

The ministry is seeking power to work miracles, healing, and other things. I don't know. I don't want to criticize anybody, but that's not what Paul was after.

He was after living in resurrection power. So that his life... See, there's only two ways you can live. One is by your Adamic nature, flesh and blood metabolism.

And the other way is by the resurrection of Christ. There's no other way to live. There's no other source of life.

Only two ways of life. And we make that choice every day. We choose to indulge our Adamic appetites and desires.

Or we choose to pray and find out what God wants. That doesn't mean we never have our desires satisfied. It doesn't mean that at all.

It just means that we reserve our choices from our will. We have a will. And it has to be kept razor sharp.

And we have to always have our choices under the control of our will. Now that's important. What happens is our body and our mind and our soul begin to determine our choices.

And our will in the meanwhile is saying this is not scriptural. This is not the best. I had not to be doing that.

And if our will is not strong enough in the Lord and we keep it strong in the Lord by living a wholesome Christian life. We keep our will strong so that our will is in control of our choices. Now, by our will we choose to live by God's life.

We choose to do the things that the scripture commands. And when we do God gives us life. Eternal life comes through keeping God's commandments.

That's in Romans 6.22. It says you have your fruit unto holiness. And the end of it, the result of it is everlasting life. Life comes from keeping the commandments of God.

But you do that with your will. You choose. Let me give you an example of that.

Take a peek at 1 Timothy 6. And you'll see what I mean when I say by your will you obey God and thus you gain life. 1 Timothy 6. And if you look at... Now, look at verse 11. Look at verse 11.

1 Timothy 6.11 But you men of God flee from all this. Now, he's talking primarily about the love of money. If you read the preceding verses before that he's talking largely about seeking money.

They sought money even in those days. See if there's anything else he mentioned besides money. Because you can see when he uses the conjunction but he's referring to something prior to this.

Well, it's a general exhortation to righteousness and holiness particularly concerning elders in the church and that thing. Then he gets in and he goes off in a big deal about the love of money. And he says but you men of God flee from all of this.

Just flee from this. Given your whole life to make money. Can you see how the prosperity message is 180 degrees out of sync? I mean, it is not the message of the Lord.

It is not the message of the Lord. He says flee from this. Boy, there's tremendous examples in the Bible about the love of money, isn't there? Balaam? Gehazi? Ananias and Sapphira? Judas? Whoa! Those are heavy, heavy illustrations.

We're not to be... Jesus... You know, of all the gods of the Greeks and Romans Jesus only mentioned one in the New Testament. You know what god that was? Mammon. The Syrian god of riches.

It's the only god that Jesus mentioned. No man can serve God and Mammon. And the reason for that is because money... We amass money as a substitute for God.

That's exactly why we do it. Now you think if you had five million dollars we'll say, in the bank, okay? What good is that going to do you? What's it going to make possible? It's going to make possible things for you to do that now you can only do through prayer. Think about that.

Health. Joy. Peace.

Taking a vacation, going here and there. We seek money because we want something in hand so we can do what we want apart from prayer. Oh, we may pray but if we have money we can do it without prayer.

And that's why Jesus contrasted those two gods. He said, you've got to make up your mind which one you're going to trust. Which one you're going to serve.

Because they both bring security. They both bring peace of mind. They both bring enough to eat.

They both bring housing. They both bring the ability to quit what you're doing and just go lay on the beach. They both bring these.

Both of them. We can find our pleasure and security and achievement in God or we can find it in money. See, that's why he contrasted them.

And that's why people lay up money so that they do not have to depend on God. You know the Bible says about working and making money Oh, that's okay. It says, do so so you may have to give to him who has need.

No. I didn't have to say that, did I? That's what it says. Work so that you may have to give to him who has need.

That's not part of our culture but that's what the books say. So amassing great amounts of money is an American value. But it's far from being a Christian value.

He says, but you, oh man of God, flee from it. No, you can walk away from it. You can jog away from it.

You can take two or three steps and look back at it. Or you can run like 60. Flee! And pursue righteousness.

You see what I'm saying by it's an act of will? See, this is all an act of will. You say, well Christ will do it in me. No, he won't.

You have to do it. If you do it, Christ will be formed in you. But you can't lay back like a flippant flopper and just lay back and do nothing and Christ lifts you up and moves you around.

No, it isn't going to happen. You do it. He didn't say to Timothy, wait until Christ does this in you.

He says, take off running. Get on your sneakers and get going, boy. Flee from these things.

Pursue righteousness. Chase it down the street. Because it's eluding you.

Is that right, Valerie? Yeah, it's getting out of sight. Pursue godliness. Pursue faith.

See, this is where your will is governing your choices rather than your body governing your choices. Sometimes when your flesh gets out of hand and you say, did you ever have this happen? Say, I know I shouldn't do that, but I'm going to do it. I know I'm going to do it.

I shouldn't be doing it. Did you ever get in that situation? You don't have to raise your hand. That's when your flesh is taking over your choices.

You see that? And you're losing out. And the way you keep that will of yours strong is by prayer, meditating in the Bible, gathering with the saints, serving God. You keep your will so strong that you don't, you know, I know I hadn't ought to do it, but I'm going to do it.

That sloppy thing. You can't enter the kingdom that way. Boy, it takes all that you've got to do it.

And you can do it. You can. And God will strengthen your will if that's what you want.

He'll give you a razor sharp will so you can choose the right things. It doesn't mean you're perfect. It just means when an issue comes up during the day you don't flop around and follow your senses, your sensual appetites.

Because they only lead to destruction. He said, pursue endurance, pursue love, pursue gentleness. Now for some of us that's easy because we're gentle by nature.

Others are very bombastic and aggressive by nature. And we have to pursue gentleness. Huh? That's another thing you have to chase down the street.

Some people it's easy to be gentle. They are just born gentle. But even that gentleness will fail under enough pressure so even it has to be crucified and raised again to be eternal.

Isn't that so? The most gentle of people will begin to get real aggressive if they get pushed hard enough. Oh my, my. Alright, he says, fight the good fight of faith.

So we see faith is not just belief and doctrine. Faith necessitates warring. Warring.

It's a fight. You've got enemies who are determined that you're not going to pursue Jesus Christ. And they are masters of deception.

They are masters of deception. And that's really the purpose of a preacher in a church is to disciple you. See, the very word disciple means discipline.

It's to discipline your mind in the ways of God. That's my job. And I'm telling you, this is the day when you can't do it by yourself.

You're going to get tricked. You have to be disciplined by the word because you can be positive you're right and be absolutely wrong. So God has, that's the purpose of our assembling.

So God can free us from deception. And if you are deceived and you stay steady with a congregation that is moving in the spirit, God will speak to you and help you. Alright, now.

It's a fight. He said, now, he comes to what he's going after. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called.

So we see by that that it's not something handed to us in full when we accept Christ. How many can see that? Otherwise this wouldn't make any sense. He said, eternal life is something that you've been called to.

Paul was called to eternal life. And he was pursuing it by laying aside everything that he might gain Christ. And eternal life is Jesus Christ.

I am the resurrection and the life. And when you gain Christ, you have gained the resurrection. And Christ has to be gained.

That's the burden for tonight. He has to be gained. It's something that you gain.

Isn't that works, Brother Thompson? It's the right kind of works. Salvation is always works. It's a fight.

It's a race. I run, Paul says. I run to obtain.

And if you know anything about running, you know it's difficult. It's taxing. Running is one of the most taxing things there is.

Particularly long distance running. It is so taxing. It's effort.

And you have to... You and I have been called to live by another kind of life. We have one kind now. But we have been called to live by another kind.

And that kind is infinitely better. It's infinitely better. It's not subject to corruption.

It's not subject to sickness. Or weakness. Or tiredness.

It's like the fullness of energy and thinking and being and operating to a level that is absolutely superior to anything you can imagine. That's eternal life. It has more than existing forever.

Because the devil will exist forever. But he has no eternal life. So eternal life is not talking about longevity.

It's talking about a kind of life. The kind of life by which God lives. Eternal life is really the life of God.

And it comes to us in the form of Jesus Christ. And if we have been called to be a Christian, then we have been called to life. Does that make sense to you? So your daily task is to lay hold on the life, the portion of life that is presented to you on any given day.

And in any given day you can choose to live by your Adamic life. I want to be me. And of course when we are young Christians the idea of giving up your Adamic life and all the warm fuzzies in favor of something that you're not at all sure of.

You're not even sure that you want it. But you're a good person and you don't want to go to hell. But other than that you're not all that positive that you really want to give up your flesh and blood life.

You may talk about it, but when push comes to shove it's something else. And when you're young and full of moxie, you know, and life seems to be spread out before you as a golden bridge leading to a rainbow future, you know, it's not all that inviting. So you have to kind of take it by faith and if you take it that way, out of obedience and faith, there's no problem with that.

Even though it doesn't seem to you like anything you want. But just out of the love of God and the fear of God there's nothing wrong with that. But as you get into the thing, like Pilgrim drawing near to the city, and you begin to see what God is talking about, you're so anxious, like Paul, to lay down the corruption that we're trying to live in, the animal corruption, that you may live by the eternal life of God, that you realize, hey, I really made a good decision here.

This is the right thing to do. No matter how I came into it, I may have been for fire insurance, but I really got myself into something here that's really going to be okay. And I guess the older you get, the more that you appreciate.

Because the life of the flesh, the life of nature, there's corruption in all of nature. And it's young and it's strong and it's vibrant, whether it's a tree or a person or a dog or whatever it is. We had a dog for 17 years.

Was that how old she was? 17 years old when she died. We couldn't bear to take her to the vet. She was the fastest thing on wheels when she was alive.

I mean, she could move. She was full of energy and life. And I didn't want her to ever die.

Do any of you have a dog that you don't ever want to die? I'm sure you all do. Kids do. Like, that dog will never die.

But she began to get older. You know, after she was 10 years old, she wasn't as frisky as she was. And at 13 and at 14.

In the last year of her life, it really would have been a mercy to the dog, I guess, to take her to the vet and have her put away. But I wanted her to die in her own time on her own property and be buried there right in her own backyard. So I didn't take her.

We'd taken dogs to the vet, but this one we didn't. She was too much a part of the family. But the last couple of months of her life, she could barely drag.

And finally she got where she couldn't. And I had to go out and feed her by hand a couple of times a day. I'd just go out and try to get her to eat out of my hand.

She really didn't want to eat. But I would have her give her some water. And this went on for maybe a month.

And I thought, she's going to go pretty soon. She's going to last like this. But this... And to finish the story, you're all wondering what will happen.

I wasn't going to finish it, but I'll finish it. So one day I went out and... Today's the day she wouldn't eat. I went out again in a couple of hours and she gave three or four gasps.

Like that. And she was gone. And I... But she died under the back stoop in her own familiar smells, in her own familiar territory.

And I took her out and dug a hole in the backyard and put her in. Covered her up with newspaper. I didn't have the heart to throw dirt on her.

And she was so cute. Really, I called Audrey out to see her, but Audrey preferred to remember what she was. But she was so cute, because all that was sticking out was just her head and the newspaper was up to her neck like that.

And then I threw dirt on top of her. She was a good dog. If any dog ever went to heaven, that's the dog.

But anyway... People, that's life. That's life. And there's death in it.

You know, as young as a pup, you can remember her and the good years that she had and her faithfulness to the family and gentleness with the kids and all. You remember that. She was a good dog.

Not all dogs are good. She was a good dog. And she had a good life.

But that's nature. And that's the way we are as people. We don't realize it when we're young.

Every young person thinks, I'll never die. It'll never happen to me. But you know, the years go by somehow.

And there's death working in you from the time you're born. It's working in there. That's the fall that's happened to us.

God planned all that in existence in advance of creating us. He knew that our Adamic life was to be a prototype. It was to be temporary of true life.

God doesn't contemplate making sons and then having them die. That's not God's idea of anything. He knew we would sin.

And He knew we needed to be humbled. Because we're little gods. And our destiny is to rule under God, under Christ, govern His creation.

And so, He put us in this body to test us. It was never meant to be eternal. Never meant to be eternal.

And so, God gives us a choice each day. He says, how about living? How about laying aside that which already is passing away and laying hold on true life so you'll be with me forever, alive. Not half dead as you are when you get over 70.

But alive. Alive. Perfect recall.

You don't start off and master a musical instrument and then have death make it all in vain. You don't accomplish something and develop relationships to have them all cut off. It's not like that anymore.

It's all eternal. Isn't that wonderful? This body can't be eternal. It's not made that way.

It's not God's will that His sons be in animal bodies. Oh, hallelujah. I get excited when I talk about life.

And so, the thing is that it's something to which we have been called. To live by God's life. But in order to do this, you have to fight for it.

Because Satan is determined that you're going to die. He is death. And so, every day of your Christian life, death and life are at hand, struggling for the mastery of you.

Do you realize that? And the only thing that keeps you from defaulting to death is your will. And your will, you have to choose to do what God said. That's the terrible disaster of preaching that grace is an alternative to God's commandments.

Oh, boy, wherever that came from. No, life comes as you choose to flee these things. As you choose to pursue righteousness.

As you choose to count everything as garbage. As you choose to pursue life and pursue Christ. Does that make sense to you? It's a very vital, a very dynamic thing.

And it's always today. It's never yesterday or tomorrow. It's always today.

The hope is tomorrow. The past has brought you here. But it's right now where Satan is competing for your attention.

And Christ is competing for your attention. And you decide. God won't do that.

He has given us a will that is part of our characteristic as a human. And we have to decide we want God. It would be better if God made those decisions for us.

But He won't. Take hold of the eternal life to which you are called. Lay hold on it.

Grasp it. Don't let anything talk you out of it. And so many things will try to.

So many things will say, look here and look there. Isn't this attractive? Isn't that attractive? Just think if you go this way. Well, you can serve God when you're old and dying.

But right now, look at what's before you. Look at all that life holds for you. See? And Jesus says, set your affection on things above.

Put your treasures in heaven. Put them in heaven. Jesus says, do you hear that? That's not a nice thing.

That's the way you're going to live. Take what you value and put it in heaven. If God gives you some of it here, that's icing on the cake.

But if He doesn't, you've got it in the bank. I mean, the bank. You don't have to worry about it folding.

The bank of heaven where thieves cannot get in. Rust cannot get in. I mean, your treasures are safe in Jesus.

How many believe that? That which I have committed unto Him against that day. That day is the day when He comes and raises you from the dead to face your future. And whether you are raised into life depends on what you do today.

You have to lay hold on it now. If you hope to have it in that day, that's the meaning of the parable of the virgins. The oil is the eternal life.

And if you let it run out, you will not be admitted to the kingdom when the Lord comes. That's the meaning of the parable. They're all virgins.

And they all started out with lamps. It's not a type of the unsaved. But the foolish, the careless, the sin of carelessness.

We don't think much about the sin of neglect or of carelessness. But it kept those foolish virgins from going in to be with the bridegroom. So carelessness is not looked upon with favor by the Lord.

The next parable is the talents. That guy didn't murder anybody nor did he commit adultery. You wicked, lazy slave.

You didn't use the abilities that I gave you in the kingdom. Outer darkness. No abilities for you.

They're going to be given to another. Your abilities are removed from you. Your opportunities for service are removed from you.

Just go enjoy the outer darkness for a while. Maybe forever. Just for carelessness.

Just for neglect. Just for not fighting the fight of faith. Just for not laying hold on life.

We don't usually think of sin that way, do we? We usually think of it as going out and raping somebody or murdering or stealing or lying or defrauding someone. But that wasn't the case with, when he says, as it was in the days of Noah, they were marrying, giving you marriage, buying, selling, till the flood came and carried them away. That's what you have to watch out for.

Business as usual. And that's where Satan gets us. Neglect.

Not pushing the battle. Not taking advantage of today. Saying, well, I'll serve God tomorrow.

Today I've got business. Pray that you never have a day you have so much business you can't pray, you can't meditate on God's Word. Because you lost ground that day.

You didn't live in His life that day. I know we're busy. We're all busy.

But we have to pray that God will give us time to pray and to read the Word. Because that's how Satan gets us, is an inch at a time. Just keeping us so busy.

First thing you know, we've missed three days, five days, seven days, ten days. And deadly damage has been done. We have lost in the kingdom and don't realize it.

Those were days that were meant to add life to us. We frittered it away. Serious business, isn't it? It's the best way to live.

Give way to your flesh and you'll end up with AIDS. Or disaster of some kind. Loss of your respect.

All kinds of things. It's the best way to go and the only way to go. Alright.

Now. Take hold of the eternal life to which you recall when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses. In the sight of God who gives life to everything and of Christ Jesus who while testifying before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, I charge you to keep this command without spot or blame until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ which God will bring about in his own time.

Alright, now let's go back. We'll finish up in Philippians 3. I'm about through. Does everybody feel really urged? Alright, now.

So, in the same thing that he wrote to Timothy in Philippians 3, he said, I want to know Christ and the power of resurrection. He's still talking about laying hold on life. And the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings.

Now, that's part of it. He said, I don't like that part. But it's necessary because we learn some things from God through blessing and joy and happiness and there's other things we learn from God through pain and suffering and delayed gratification.

And they're both necessary. They're both necessary. You can't say, oh, I just want to be blessed because that's only half the action.

The knowledge of God very often comes through times of prolonged irritation and things we don't like. And if we want Christ, then we're going to take the bitter with the sweet. Even Jesus learned obedience by the things he suffered.

And I, for one, I want to learn obedience. I know that obedience goes beyond just saying, well, I will obey God. It has to be taught at a very deep level by obeying God when it's difficult.

Isn't that so? So that's why that's in there. Paul wanted them both. Bring them on, bring them on.

Becoming like him in his death, so, and this next statement is absolutely incomprehensible to us today. Doesn't make sense. Somehow to attain to the resurrection from the dead.

Somehow. You get the impression that Paul is saying, well, what am I, that somehow I can just make the resurrection. Whoa.

That doesn't fit anything, does it? Well, what do we do when the Bible doesn't fit our doctrine? What do we do? You don't know? Change our doctrine. That's the only thing to do. One thing I know, the Bible is right.

I'm not sure about my doctrine, but I do know the Bible is right. And, well, people, I have never, never read a translation or a commentator that treated this head on, full blown. But that we know that he's talking about the resurrection from the dead is found a couple of verses later where he says in the same chapter, starting with verse 20, our citizenship is in heaven.

Doesn't mean he wants to go there, no. That's not what he's talking about if you read on. As we eagerly await a Savior from there.

See, we're waiting for something to come from heaven. How many see that? Hebrews says we're looking for the city to come. We've got to get fixed in our mind that heaven is coming with Jesus.

It's not our going so much as it is we're waiting for the Lord and the city to come. The Savior from there, the Lord Jesus who by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, now notice this, by the power that he has will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body. Now, there's one of the best descriptions of the resurrection in the Bible and we see it's in context with what he just said, if any means I may attain to the resurrection of the dead.

So he hasn't changed subjects. He's talking about so that when the Lord comes his body will be transformed. Now that's something that I think, correct me if I'm wrong, but I think the churches take it for granted that they're going to be like Jesus when he comes.

I think they just take it for granted. Well, I've done Romans 10, 9 and 10 and I've tried to do good, but when the Lord comes I'm going to be just like him. I think this kind of puts a little cold water on that idea.

How do you feel about that? Does it seem to do that? Now, this is a very personal thing with the Lord. This is a very personal thing. We think of the resurrection as being a mass movement.

I don't think so. I think the Lord loves his saints so much that he's going to transform them. I know it says in a moment in the twelfth covenant, I understand that.

But this is so meaningful to Jesus because here's these people that in order to prove their faithfulness to him, they have been dragged through the mud many times. Jesus treats his bride very hard. He really does.

He brings her through some real tough things. Have any of you been through some tough things? You're probably worried about the future. Think about the past.

And I think you'll see that you've been through some pretty tough things because he's proving her love. And he's bringing her to the same spiritual status that he enjoys so she may be with him where he is in the fullness of God's presence. And so this bride of his really goes through it.

And he knows it. And it doesn't rejoice his heart to see his bride crying out in the night year after year year after year Oh Lord, how long? Oh Lord, how long? Now Joy Feenstra is an example. Do you mind my using Joy for an example? She's a very strong Christian lady.

If you didn't get to meet her, she was here Sunday night. She is Brother Feenstra's wife. Brother Feenstra is the architect who's drawing up our plans for our education wing that we're planning.

Joy has been deaf for how many years, Brother? 35 years. That's why Brother Feenstra You talk about a devoted husband. I thought a lot about that, Brother.

You may think that goes unnoticed. But all the while I was talking, Sunday night he was writing so that Joy could read it. Just as he has done tonight.

Now that's a husband for you. I didn't say that to embarrass you, but I am very impressed. I'm very impressed.

But you know what Joy said to me Sunday night? She said, By His stripes I was healed. I said, Joy, you're right on. You're right on.

Never give up. And she would love to hear the music and the preaching. Can you think going to church faithfully for 35 years and not being able to hear the preaching, what that's like? And staying there faithfully and raising our hands, can you imagine what that's like? Don't take your hearing for granted.

Some people can't hear that well. But never giving up. And the Lord looks down and don't you think He would love? All He has to do to Joy is just touch her.

She's got 20-20 hearing, if there is such a thing. That's all He has to do. And He loves Joy with a love we can't even comprehend.

And that's all He has to do to rejoice her heart. But I prayed about Joy since I've met her and I feel that she's special to the Lord and He's doing something wonderful in her life. And I think when Joy is to be healed, whether it's in this world or the next, we'll all know it.

I've been around enough divine healing to know that you can kind of tell when it's going to happen. The faith just rises and you just know there it is. So I don't strain about things in the meantime.

Because I know we were healed by His stripes and the timeless vision of God. And so when He transforms that is coming Joy's body into conformity with His glorious body, she won't be deaf anymore. She'll have no trouble speaking.

She'll have no trouble doing anything. And I don't think the Lord's just going to come down upon ten million people and say, Behold! I don't think so. I think He's going to come down and say, Joy Finstra, you waited for me with such patience, such faith.

Joy, be transformed. Mourning has come for you, sister. My daughter, my spouse.

Mourning has come. I think the resurrection is just that way. A very personal reward of Jesus to those who have been burned at the stake.

Fanny Crosby who wrote such beautiful hymns never saw the light of day. Others who have borne torture for the gospel or have had their hopes dashed like I was telling you about Oswald Chambers' wife just marries Oswald Chambers and then he dies. And she spends the next several decades faithfully writing from the notes that she took of his sermons.

And the Lord comes down to her, to Joy, to others. Paul, who tradition says was beheaded. James, I think, was slain by the sword.

John exiled and the others have borne so much for Christ. Paul. My Paul.

It's here, Paul, what you wrote about in Philippians. I'm going to transform your body by the power that I have. Paul.

Rise. I believe the resurrection is going to be just that way. Now, in the case of the man that was faithful with his talents, the Lord said something very significant to him.

He said, well done, good, faithful servant. Enter the joy of your Lord. He didn't say enter your joy.

He said enter the joy of your Lord. Well, what is the joy of the Lord except to be able to say to one like that, you've been faithful over a few things, be ruler over many. It's the time of Christ's joy and I don't believe he's going to abbreviate it out of necessity because time is short.

He has to raise everybody at once without even calling them by name. No, I don't believe that. You say, but the time, the time.

Do you know that when you get in the spirit realm, time ceases. Time is just a function of our heartbeat, isn't it? That's what gives us our sense of time. But in the spirit realm, before Abraham was, I am.

See, not I was. I am. Time doesn't mean anything anymore.

A thousand years is a day. A thousand years is a day. And yet a day in your life and mine is so important.

It says a thousand years. But the thing is God wants to do in it. And will do if we don't bury ourselves in that which is passing away with the doing of it.

No, I think he'll take the time. The winter is over and past. The singing of birds has come.

Rise, my love. Rise and come away. To the dens of leopards.

Come with me on the mountains of spices. No, he's not going to rush that. And for joy it will mean after so many years being able to hear the singing of those birds and enjoy the view from the dens of leopards.

Oh, eye has not seen or ear has heard neither has entered into the heart of man to imagine the things that God has prepared for those who love him. I think we've made salvation too cheap. It's like, give me my ticket.

Don't make demands on me. I don't want to go to hell. I want to go to heaven.

There's no love of God in that. There's no love of God in this thing. Just get me out of here.

There's no love for God or Christ in that. Get me in my mansion. Get me out of my troubles.

Me, me, me, me, mommy. There's no love for Christ in that. Get me out of the great tribulation.

Don't let me suffer. Whatever, all the saints of history have suffered and are suffering today. Don't let that happen to me, me, me, me, mommy.

Ah, there's no love. Some of the Catholic saints have sought to suffer for God, that they might be privileged to suffer for God. Then we come along with this cheap stuff.

Oh, Paul says to know the fellowship of his sufferings and the power of his resurrection if I regain him. Well done, Paul. Good and faithful servant, you didn't know it, but I made your word scripture that you wrote out of your eye disease and your chain to a Roman soldier so you couldn't keep Shabbat or eat kosher or anything else you wanted to do.

And now, Paul, you're a mountain of fire, and all the works of my hands are yours. Just as Pharaoh said to Joseph, only in the throne will I be greater than you. All Egypt is before you.

Go enjoy it. What do you think about that? Think it might be a pretty personal thing? You might think he knows your name? Might call you forth like Lazarus? Come forth. Someone says a good thing you said, Lazarus, or all the dead in the ground would have come forth.

So they said Lazarus, just the one they wanted would come forth. That's probably true. God says come forth.

Wow. Here they all come. Amen.

Let's stand and tell the Lord we love him. Hallelujah. Lord Jesus, we do love you, Lord.

We're so ashamed of the way we neglect the good things that you hold out to us, Lord. Praise your name. We pray, Lord, your blessing will be richly upon joy, Lord, as I think of the 35 years of sitting in church and not just faithfully coming, faithfully coming and believing God for 35 years.

Bless her richly, Lord. Bless her richly. And bless Brother Finkster, Lord, for patiently copying out each sermon so that she would have food for her soul.

Bless him, Lord. Bless him, Lord, and reward him for his faithfulness. He's an example to us all.

Hallelujah, Lord. We know, Jesus, that you love us, and when we're hurt and when we're perplexed, you're hurt and perplexed. You were hurt and perplexed on the earth, and we know we have to do these things, Lord, because they're necessary, that we'll be fit to live with you.

We'll be able, Lord, when you come, that you will not be disappointed. You will not have to look at us with disappointment, realizing that after all you did for us, we still were neglectful, we still were fearful, we still held back. Lord, we don't want to face that day.

We don't want to ever face a disappointed Christ. So, Lord, I pray that each one of us, Lord, from this point on, and the fact that we're alive means you've given us another chance, and I pray, Lord, from this day on, we'll do like the Apostle Paul. We'll make each day a pursuit of Christ, of his knowledge, of his person, of everything that has to do with him, and of godliness, and all that Paul told Timothy.

That we'll really do it, Lord, and rejoice in it. We'll work righteousness and rejoice in working righteousness, knowing, Lord, no matter what the pains and perplexities of our present life are, there'll come a day, there'll surely come a day, when we hear that voice of all voices call us by our name, and the electricity will go through us, and we'll know, Lord, whether we're alive at that time, or we're called forth from the ground. We know, Lord, we'll hear that voice, and then we'll be just like you, by your power, we'll be made whole and wholly alive, that we may enter your joy and rejoice with you.

As you told us, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine again until I drink it with you in the kingdom, and we know that will be a time of rejoicing, a gala time for heaven and earth, as the marriage of the Lamb will have come. The ordeal is over, the travail is past, and you and we will rejoice forevermore. Now help us, Lord, from what you have graciously granted us tonight, to ponder, Lord, and to profit from it.

And I pray, Lord, now you will keep us all with our families, safe, holy in your presence, remembering that we have been called to life, in Jesus' name, and everyone said, Amen.

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