

# Christian Freedom: Branded but Not Bound

by Warren Wiersbe

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*Warren Wiersbe's sermon highlights the importance of evaluating our ministries through the lens of grace and the glory of God, rather than through legalistic measures.*

**Duration:** 42:00

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:1, Matthew 6:7, 2 Corinthians 10:12, Galatians 6:12-14, Galatians 6:17

**Topics:** "Freedom"

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## Description

In this sermon, the apostle Paul encourages believers to evaluate their own ministries using the word of God as a mirror. He warns against ministering in a legalistic way and emphasizes the importance of examining one's motives. Paul suggests four questions to ask in evaluating ministry: Is it based on the grace of God? Is the walk aligned with God's principles? Is it ministered by the Spirit of God? And is it focused on the cross of Christ? He emphasizes that the quality of ministry is determined by the heart and urges believers to prioritize a genuine relationship with God over external actions.

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## Transcript

We come to the end of Galatians, turning to chapter 6, verse 11, and reading through verse 18. Someone remarked that I spent more time on Galatians than Paul did. Galatians 6, 11.

Ye see how large a letter, or with what large letters, I have written unto you with my own hand. As many as desire to make a fair show in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised, only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ. For neither they themselves who are circumcised keep the law, but desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh.

But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.

Henceforth let no man trouble me, for I bear in my body the marks, the brands, of the Lord Jesus. Amen. Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

Amen. Paul usually dictated his letters, and then when the secretary, the amanuensis, had finished writing the letter, Paul would take the pen and add his signature. Now, Paul's signature was written in 2

Thessalonians chapter 3 at the end of every letter.

2 Thessalonians 3.17. The salutation of Paul with mine own hand, which is the token in every epistle, so I write the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen. So Paul would usually take the secretary's pen, and in order to authenticate the letter, that the recipients knew it was not a forgery, he would sign the closing benediction.

But in the case of Galatians, verse 11 indicates he wrote the whole thing, and he did so in large letters. Now, some Bible students believe that this is an indication of his eye trouble. His thorn in the flesh may have been eye trouble, and when he wrote, he had to write in large letters.

Other commentators think maybe it wasn't eye trouble, but hand trouble. In one of his many shipwrecks, or in stoning, or in beating, his hand had been injured, and therefore he couldn't write in the precise hand. He had to use large letters.

Be that as it may, the indication here is that Paul was so concerned about this problem, this problem of legalism in the churches, that he didn't wait to find a secretary. He just took the pen and wrote the thing himself, in spite of his handicap. That's a mark of greatness.

He could have had many excuses, but he said, no, the problem is too great, we're going to dive right into this thing and solve the problem. Now, he comes to the end of this letter, and this is the last he has to say about this problem. He says, from henceforth, let no man trouble me.

I've told you what I'm going to tell you, here it is. Now, what does he do in the closing verses of this last chapter? The Apostle Paul wants to help us evaluate our own ministries. We have a great deal of fun, all of us, evaluating other people's lives and ministries.

It's a lot of fun to get a pair of evangelical binoculars and watch other people and say, they do this wrong, and they do that wrong, and we are more spiritual than they are. But Paul suggests that we use the Word of God as a mirror to examine our own lives and ministries. Is it possible that some of us are ministering in a legalistic way? Is it possible that there are areas in our church, in our homes, that are legalistic and not of the grace of God? And so in these closing verses, Paul said, I want to help you evaluate your ministry.

I want to help you to evaluate other people's ministries. You don't want to fall prey to some legalistic preacher or missionary or ministry. Today we have just as many, if not more, people who are out not to win people to Christ, but they're out to capture Christians and enslave them.

And we've got to be careful. I've got to be careful as the pastor of this church, lest my ministry be a ministry of law and not a ministry of grace. And if you should ever leave the Moody Church and search for another church, you're transferred to Baltimore or some other place, how do you go about evaluating that ministry? Do you look at the budget? Do you look at the buses? Do you look at the pews? Do you look at the buildings? What do you look at? What do you listen for? How do you evaluate a preacher on radio or TV? How do you evaluate some book that you're reading? And so I would say in these closing verses, Paul is giving me a great deal of help for my own life and for my own ministry, and perhaps for yours as well.

He suggests that there are four questions that we can ask in evaluating our own ministries to see whether or not they are legalistic or whether or not they are ministries of the grace of God. Now there's a difference. Question number one, is our ministry motivated by the glory of God? Now this he deals with in

verses 12 through 14.

You see, motive is important in your ministry. The question is not what am I doing or what are you doing? The question is why are you doing it? That's the theme of chapter 6 of Matthew, the second section of the Sermon on the Mount. In chapter 5 of Matthew, in the first section of the Sermon on the Mount, our Lord dealt with sin.

He said, let me talk to you about the bad things you ought to avoid. In chapter 6, he moves into service. He says, okay, we want to talk about praying and fasting and giving.

And the first thing I want to ask you is what is your motive? Now the Pharisees had a motive for praying. They wanted the glory of men. They wanted to walk away from the prayer meeting and hear somebody say to somebody else, oh, I wish I could pray like that.

And they'd go home satisfied. It was a great meeting. Somebody heard me pray.

And when they gave, they blew trumpets to let people know they were giving. And when they fasted, you knew it. When you met them on the corner, it looked like they had appendicitis.

Their faces were all showing sorrow and pain. You know, if your spirituality makes you that painful, don't be spiritual. And so Jesus says motives are important.

You know why motives are important? People see the outward action. God sees the heart. And it's the heart that determines the quality of the ministry.

That's why it's a difficult thing to evaluate ministry. It's my privilege to be the chairman of a foreign missions board, Home and Foreign Slavic Gospel Association. Peter Danica, who founded it, was saved here at the Moody Church more than 50 years ago, and God called him to rush the gospel to the Russians and other people.

And it's my privilege to be on that board. And one of the responsibilities we have is evaluating candidates. And we have a form that they fill out, and you go over that form, and you ask what ministry have you been in.

But you know, we can see the outside. Only God can see the heart. That's why the apostles in Acts chapter one, when they were going to elect a new apostle, prayed, O Lord, you see the hearts of all men.

And so Jesus says, watch out for your motive, because your motive determines the quality of the ministry. It's possible to minister and get the praise of people, but not get the blessing of God. It's possible to be a very famous celebrity in Christian circles, but not be recognized by God as a faithful servant, because the motive is wrong.

And you don't know the motive, and I don't know the motive. And Jesus warns us not to try to judge people's motives. Only God can do that.

That's why at the judgment seat of Christ, some ministry that we thought was very permanent and high quality is going to burn right up. And other ministry that we thought was very halting and failing is going to shine gold and silver and precious stones. So motive is important.

Now, what was the motive of the legalists? The motive of the legalist was to make a fair show in the flesh. That word fair show simply means to play a role before men. In other words, the legalists, the Judaizers, who were creating all these problems for Paul, were not doing it for the glory of God.

They were doing it for the praise of men. They belonged to a group, and this group would get together and measure the statistics. How many did you win to our cause? How many did you win to our cause? And they would cut a few more notches in their rifle.

Now there are ministries like that today. Does this mean it's wrong to have statistics? Of course not. The Holy Spirit counts numbers in the book of Acts, 3,000, 5,000, a multitude of priests.

You get to the book of Revelation, a great multitude that no man could number. There's nothing wrong with statistics. Mr. Spurgeon used to say those who criticize statistics usually have none to report.

But statistics can be a snare. There is such a thing as the snare of statistics. To think that because we won this many, quote-unquote, we did God a favor.

We baptized this many or reached this many. Now don't misunderstand me. I would be very happy if service after service all of these seats were filled.

It would thrill my heart. It would thrill your heart too. Some of you would complain because a stranger might sit in your seat, and you have been there for 30 years, and we can't have a service if you're not in the right seat.

But you'd be happy. We'd all be thrilled at this. And it's possible to accomplish this.

We could bring in some jugglers. We could string a rope across the balcony and bring in a Christian tightrope walker. And as he crosses the rope, he could give his testimony.

And you know, this would attract a lot of people. This would attract a lot of people. And folks would say, you know, Weersbe is filling up Moody Church.

With what? You see, our Lord makes it very clear there's a big difference between building Christians and building a crowd. There's a big difference between building a church and building a crowd. You can build a crowd with a talking horse.

You can't build a church with a talking horse. Now before you get too critical of me, let me finish the message. The legalists were living for man's glory, and they were using pressure to get their converts.

They were constraining you. That's the same word that Paul uses of himself when it says he forced people, Christians, to blaspheme. When Saul the rabbi was out fighting the church and he'd get ahold of some Christians, he would force them to blaspheme.

So there's a ministry of fleshly constraint for the glory of man. In fact, Paul had something to say about this back in 2 Corinthians in chapter 10. Let me read it to you.

Verse 7. Do ye look on things after the outward appearance? And so many people do. They look upon meetings and ministries and so forth on the outward appearance. If any man trust himself that he is Christ, let him of himself think this again, that as he is Christ, even so are we Christ.

Down in verse 12. For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves, but they measuring themselves by themselves and comparing themselves among themselves are not wise. And I have been in meetings like that.

Evangelical mutual admiration societies. And friend, if you didn't belong to that group, you weren't spiritual. Now the Judaizers, the legalists, uses forcing methods, constraining methods to win converts to his cause, not to help the convert, but to be able to add one more statistic to the records, to be able to get up and say, this is what we did.

But a spiritual ministry is for the purpose of glorifying God. Any ministry that is not motivated by the glory of God is not worthy of your support. It doesn't take long to read a magazine or read a report or listen to a speech to find out whether or not that ministry is out to glorify God.

If you ever go away from a church service saying, what a great God we have, what a marvelous Savior we have, what a rich Bible we have, that's a ministry that glorifies God. But if we go away saying, my, what eloquence, my, oh, I could never begin to, then we're looking at things from the outward appearance. They said of the Apostle Paul that his physical appearance was rather despicable and his speech was contemptible.

Paul was not an orator. There were times when Paul sort of stumbled in his preaching, and maybe if we heard him preach, we'd say, I don't want to hear him again, and yet look what Paul accomplished. So the first question is, is this ministry motivated by the glory of God? Paul said, we glory in the cross.

Now, how can we glory in the cross? Nobody in Paul's day would have gloried in the cross. That's like saying, I glory in the gas chamber, I glory in the gallows, I glory in the firing squad, I glory in the electric chair. You didn't even mention the cross in polite society.

If you were at a dinner and you started talking about crucifixion, they'd throw you out because that was the most hideous form, the lowest form of execution. Jesus Christ came and took that which was rejected by men and put glory into it. Someone has said the greatest thing that the carpenter ever did was take a cross and glorify it.

Now, how do we glory in the cross? Well, we glory in the person of the cross, Jesus Christ. It's not our name. Paul said, we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.

There's some messages that you hear, all you hear is the preacher, who he is and what he did and where he went and how great he is. Paul said, no, we glory in the cross, we glory in the person of the cross, and we glory in the purpose of the cross. What is it? To crucify us? To give us victory over sin? Christ died that he might deliver us from the penalty of sin and he died that he might deliver us from the power of sin.

He said, I've been crucified to the world. This other crowd is a worldly crowd. They plan the way the world plans, they think the way the world thinks, they measure the way the world measures.

We don't do that. The world would come by the cross and say, stay away from it, get away from it. He's a failure, he's a failure.

We come to the cross and say he's a success, he's a victor. We glory in the cross because we know the power of the cross. I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live.

Now my friend, a ministry that is motivated by the glory of God focuses on the cross. We preach Christ and him crucified. That's the first test.

Is this ministry motivated by the glory of God? Now if it isn't, it's not a ministry of the Spirit of God by grace. It's legalistic. If any person, any man, any woman, any group in the Moody Church gets the glory that belongs to Jesus Christ, we'd better be careful.

Bob Cook used to tell us in Youth for Christ, if you can explain what's going on, God didn't do it. There's a lot of truth to that. Now the second test, the second question is in verses 15 and 16.

Not only is it motivated by the glory of God, but is it ministered by the Spirit of God? He says, look, being a Jew avails nothing. You've been circumcised? Fine, avails nothing. You're a Gentile? Uncircumcised? Makes no difference.

What does make a difference? The new creation. What is the new creation? His church. Jesus Christ came as the last Adam to be the head of a new creation.

The first Adam was the head of a physical, material creation. Jesus Christ came to be the head of a spiritual creation. The first Adam failed in the garden.

The last Adam prayed in the garden, not my will but thine be done. The first Adam sinned because of a tree. The last Adam took our sins on a tree.

The first Adam was cast out of paradise because he was a thief. The last Adam turned to a thief and said, today you'll be with me in paradise. It's contrast.

Now, will you lay hold of this and never forget it? When a person gets saved, he moves into a new creation. Old things are passed away. Behold, all things are become new.

It's the grace of God that does it, and we don't deal with Him on the basis of the old creation. You know, it amazes me what churches do. It's been my privilege to preach in just hundreds of churches, and I thank God for the privilege.

It gives you perspective. It gives you some some broad understanding. I see advertising of churches like this.

Come and hear so-and-so, ex-bank robber, ex-dope addict, ex-drunkard, ex-this, ex-that. Come and hear his message, and he'll fellow a preach and stir your heart, you know. But let somebody in the church have a background like that.

They don't put him on the platform to give his testimony. They put him off in the corner and say, shh, be quiet. We don't want people to know about you.

Isn't that strange? The same grace of God that moved the ex-bank robber into the new creation also moved this dear man or this dear woman into the new creation. And when we're in the new creation, we are to be looked upon as a part of the new creation. Now, the legalist didn't do this.

The legalist measured things by the old creation. Have you gone through the rituals? Have you been operated on? Are you keeping the laws? Here's a part of the old creation. What are you physically, not what are you spiritually? And Paul tells us in verses 15 and 16 that only the Holy Spirit of God can minister

in this new creation.

As many as walk according to this rule. What rule? The rule of the new creation. What is the rule of the new creation? We don't look upon people from the physical point of view or the material point of view or the financial point of view or the educational point of view.

I tell you, if the early apostles had come to be ordained, they would never have made it. Now, we're just the opposite today. You please explain to me why the conversion of a wealthy man is any greater than the conversion of a poor man.

Here's a fellow who's the president of a multimillion dollar corporation. And for some reason we stand in awe and say, oh, here's some dear fellow on Clark Street who comes staggering along and one of our track league people leads him to the Lord. But we don't want to get too close to him.

After all, he's not the president of a multimillion dollar corporation. I have a pastor friend whom I've not seen for several years. And he told me, he said, God has called me to minister only to the rich.

I said, well, you're going to have a lonely ministry. It says of Jesus, the common people heard him gladly. And the early apostles didn't have finances.

Silver and gold have we none. They had no political pressure. They had no blocks of power.

Forgive me, folks. To me, it's no more amazing that a senator gets saved than a street sweeper gets saved. They're both a part of the new creation.

And in the church, you don't look upon people as he's a businessman. He's not a businessman. He's rich.

He's poor. For in Jesus Christ, there is neither bond nor free Jew, nor Gentile, male nor female. We're all one body in Jesus Christ.

Now that's the rule of the new creation. That's the, this word rule in verse 16 is the Greek word canon, the canon of the scriptures by which you measure what books really belong in the Bible. A canon was actually the carpenter's measuring rule.

It's also used in Greek literature for the surveyor's line. Now, why does a surveyor use a line? To make sure the boundaries are straight, to make sure everything is built right. Why does a carpenter use a rule so that everything is the same standard? What is our standard? The new creation, not the old creation.

Yet each of us has to confess we have a tendency to pigeonhole people, don't we? The color of their skin, the size of their income. We pigeonhole people. He says, that's what the Judaizers do.

The Judaizers go after all the big people. Now I'm not against winning a senator, praise God, let's get them all saved. Nor am I against winning the president of the corporation.

Let's get them all saved by the grace of God. What I'm saying is don't make their conversion more exceptional than anybody else's conversion. Every conversion is a miracle of the grace of God.

Notice what he says in verse 16. How does God measure spiritual ministry? Number one, by the walk. As many as walk according to this rule.

The walk, not the preaching, the walk. Not the teaching, the walk. Not the singing, the walk.

If my walk is not straight, my preaching is not straight. And so he says to us, is this ministry ministered by the spirit of God? Does the spirit of God, does this person walk in the spirit? As many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them. You see, the Judaizers always brought war.

Whenever the flesh goes to work in a church or in a home, there's war. Back in chapter five of Galatians, verse 15, here's the Judaizers. Here's the legalist.

If ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed of one another. Look at verse 26 of chapter five. Here's the legalist.

Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another. Does that ever go on? Certainly it does. So says the scripture.

God measures us by our walk and God measures us by are we peacemakers or troublemakers. Now sometimes it's good to cause trouble. Jesus caused trouble.

There was a division because of him. Paul caused trouble. If in the ministry of the Holy Spirit and the proclaiming of the truth of the word of God, people rebel and throw us out, praise God.

John Wesley got kicked out of his own church. Mr. Moody was called crazy Moody. They lampooned Billy Sunday.

But he's talking here about the ministry in the local assembly. He said, where the spirit of God is at work, there's peace. And where the spirit of God is at work, there's mercy.

Now, the Judaizers had no mercy. They judged everybody. They were very judgmental.

They they just passed judgments that he's wrong. He's wrong. He's wrong.

He's right. He's on our side. He belongs to our group.

But, you know, where the spirit of God is at work, there's mercy. You know what mercy means? Mercy means we treat others the way God treats us. Mercy means we are forgiving.

Mercy means we don't drag out old buried sins. Love covers a multitude of sins. And upon the Israel of God, the people of God, he's not suggesting here that the church today takes the place of Israel.

It is God's Israel today. We are God's people today. One of these days, Israel will get back on the program again, and God will bless them, and this kingdom will be established.

But right now, we are the Israel of God. And, you know, the Israel in the Old Testament had these same problems. Their walk wasn't right.

They didn't have peace. They were forever being chastened because of their sin. Where there is the spirit of God at work, there is a good walk in the spirit.

There's peace. There's mercy. There's unity, harmony.

But where there's legalism, you find criticism, envying, strife. If I don't have my way, I'll pick up my Bible and go off someplace else, take my bat and ball and go to a different lot. Now in verse 17, he gives us a third question to ask.

First, is it motivated by the glory of God? Second, is it ministered by the spirit of God? Thirdly, is it marked by the suffering of God? Henceforth, let no man trouble me, for I bear in my body not the operation only of the mark of the covenant. I bear in my body the brands of the Lord Jesus Christ. Friends, that fellow who wants to control your life, that person who says, my way is the only way, you join my group, ask him how much he suffered for Jesus' sake.

I don't mean suffered for his big mouth. I don't mean suffered because of what... I mean suffered for Jesus' sake. Paul said, you bring those Judaizers up here.

They've got their statistics. Oh, they've got their role of converts. Oh, they've got their press releases.

But have they got any marks on their body from being in shipwreck? Let them bear their back and let's see if they have any marks from the whip, the rod. Have there been stoned? Now when Paul says the marks of the Lord Jesus, he's not saying he had nail marks in his hands. There are superstitious people who know more about myths than they do about the Bible who claim that Paul had the marks of the cross.

That is not true. The word he uses there is the word brands. Now back in Paul's day, people were branded.

You can't do that today. We brand the cattle, but you can't brand people. But they did back in Paul's day.

If you were a slave, you were branded. Right in the forehead. Paul was a slave.

He began his letters, Paul, the bond slave of Jesus Christ. These Judaizers are slaves to a group they belong to, pleasing each other and patting each other on the back. Slaves of tradition.

Slaves of law. I'm the slave of Jesus Christ. I'm branded and if you have any question about it, I'll show it to you, says Paul.

How much have you suffered? Criminals were branded. In fact, in the early days of our own country, criminals were branded. Nathaniel Hawthorne built his great story on the scarlet letter on that.

Paul said, I'm treated like a criminal. Here are these Judaizers. When they come to town, they roll the red carpet out for them.

They bow and scrape. Oh, they're so great, so great. I come to town, they throw me in jail.

That's all right, I'll win the jailer. Am I saying it's wrong to give honor where honor is due? Of course not. What I'm saying is Paul was marked as a criminal.

You know what Paul did? Paul did the hardest thing for any servant of God to do. Now you may disagree with this, but when you've been through it, you'll know I'm telling the truth. Paul was willing not just to sacrifice his life and his time and his money and his whole future for Jesus.

Paul was willing to take his reputation and lay that at the feet of Jesus. Now the Judaizers wouldn't do that. The reason they were Judaizers was to save their reputation.

In fact, Paul tells us that. Verse 12, the reason they're doing what they're doing is so they won't suffer persecution for the cause of Christ. They try to avoid persecution.

They try to avoid suffering. Paul said, I don't. I'm treated like a criminal.

I've taken my reputation and laid it at the feet of Jesus. Now until you've done that, until people are telling lies about you, until people are taking your name and dragging it down, don't criticize Paul. Back in Paul's day, the people who worshiped the gods were branded.

If you worshiped Osiris, you were branded with his brand. And wherever you went, you proudly would wear your brand. And folks would say, oh, you worship Diana, or you worship Isis and Osiris, or you worship... Paul said, I'm branded for Jesus Christ.

I worship Him. Over in Philippians chapter 3, he said, now look, we have the true circumcision. These people are out peddling this Old Testament law.

Why don't they read the law? In Deuteronomy, Moses even said, look, God's not talking about an operation on your flesh. He's talking about your heart. Circumcise your heart.

Jeremiah said the same thing. Ezekiel said the same thing. The prophets cried out to the Jews and said, it's not the external ritual.

It's the internal experience. And today we have baptism, and I believe in baptism. That's an external ordinance.

There better first be an internal experience. We have the Lord's table, and I believe in the Lord's table. But there better be an internal experience of receiving Christ before you receive the elements.

It's marked by the sufferings of God. Paul said, I'm a criminal. I've given my reputation for Christ.

I worship Him and adore Him. I'm branded by Him. By the way, whatever you worship and serve will brand you.

If you serve alcohol, it'll brand you. You serve dope, it'll brand you. You serve sin, it'll brand you.

You serve Christ, He'll brand you. And one of the marks of a spiritual ministry is their suffering, that I may know Him, the power of His resurrection, the fellowship of His suffering. It's not cheap.

Finally, in verse 18, very obvious, the ministry that is truly a spiritual ministry and not legalistic is motivated by the glory of God, ministered by the Spirit of God, marked by the suffering of God, and it magnifies the grace of God. The last thing Paul says in this letter, brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.

Paul signed that to every letter. This is the token that I write on every epistle. What, Paul? The law of Moses be with you.

No. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Any ministry that doesn't magnify the grace of God does not deserve your support.

You see, Paul was saved by grace. I was reading the other day, just from my own edification, what Paul wrote in 1 Timothy chapter 1 about his own conversion experience. Verse 12, I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who hath enabled me in that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, who was before a blasphemer and a persecutor and injurious, but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief, and the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.

Paul, why do you magnify God's grace? I was saved by grace. Have you been saved by grace? Oh, I've been confirmed. Have you been saved by grace? I've been catechized.

You've been saved by grace. I've been baptized. Have you been saved by grace? Paul magnified the grace of God because he was saved by grace.

He magnified the grace of God because he served by grace. Every once in a while I read 1 Corinthians 15 in verses 9 and 10. These verses encourage me.

Paul says this, for I am the least of the apostles that am not fit to be called an apostle because I persecuted the church of God, but by the grace of God I am what I am. And his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain, but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. Three times in one verse Paul says, how did I accomplish what I accomplished? My education.

No, nothing wrong with education. I can never forget Tory Johnson talking to me when I was a teenager down at Winona Lake many years ago. And Tory in those days had the habit of beating you on the head.

He'd talk to you and sort of hit you on the head like this. And he said to me, young man, you learn everything you can learn and put it under the blood. I never forgot that.

Why was Paul what he was? His dynamic personality. No. Good thing to have a personality.

Paul was what he was and did what he did by the grace of God. Paul, why do you magnify the grace of God? I was saved by grace and I served by grace and I suffered by grace. Over in second Corinthians chapter 12, that passage we all know so well, where he was suffering and he said, Oh God, take it away, take it away.

And Jesus said to him, My grace is sufficient for thee. Now any ministry that does not magnify the grace of God is not worthy of support. It's a legalistic ministry.

Here then are four questions for you to ask yourself and for me to ask myself and for us to ask our church family and any other Christian ministry. Is it motivated by the glory of God? Are we doing what we're doing to promote some tradition, to defend somebody's name? Why are we doing what we're doing? Can we honestly say God is glorified in this? Is it ministered by the spirit of God? Are we depending upon fleshly methods and fleshly means? Is it marked by the suffering of God? Does it cost us anything? The difference between a Christian job and ministry is this. Ministry costs something.

There's a price to pay. John Henry Jowett used to say, Ministry that costs nothing accomplishes nothing. Where there is no bleeding, there's no blessing.

Do we minister by the spirit of God? Are we marked by the suffering of God? And finally, do we magnify the grace of God? Do people go away and say, Praise the Lord for his grace? Do we magnify the grace of God? Those, my friends, are the tests of true spiritual ministry. Do we have the courage to apply them? Gracious Father, we have studied much in this little letter about your grace and how free we are in Christ, the blessing of being a part of the new creation, and some of these things frighten us because we are accustomed to the confinement and the protection of law. We are so wrapped up in rules and regulations that we don't have a real faith in the Holy Spirit to work in the new creation.

Forgive us. Help me and help us as a church family to minister by grace in the spirit of God for the glory of God, no matter what price we have to pay. I pray for those here tonight who don't know our wonderful Savior.

Speak to their hearts and help us to grow, Father, and mature that you might be able to do much more for us and in us and through us because we are magnifying your grace and not our law. We ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

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Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/17/SID17585.mp3>

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