

Concern For Christ-Centered Service (Part 3)

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[0 : 00] I've taken the time here to visit some truth in the book of Colossians.

And if you'll bear with me, indulge me this Sunday and God willing next Sunday, I have two more messages which will make a total of four that I want to bring to us for a number of reasons.

And I'm going to give a quick caveat with this. We've taken a break from Ecclesiastes. We have two chapters left in Ecclesiastes as we've worked our way verse by verse through that precious book of the scriptures.

But in taking this little break, I wanted to address some of what the Bible says, not all by far, but some of what the Bible says about being a servant, being a servant and how that service is grounded in and starts in the body of Christ, being a servant in the church, in the body of Christ.

Now, one of the reasons that I've put this emphasis at this particular life in our church, we have a number of new faces, new folks visiting with us. We have people that have never heard these particular messages before.

[1 : 25] I've worked them and tweaked them from years ago. And I wanted to be able to allow all of us to have God's view of what it means for us to invest in one another out of love for Christ.

What does it mean to be saved and put into the church and put into service by being put into the family of God? I want all of us to have a clear sense from scripture about the priority that God places on the church and on serving in the church.

Serving, we could say, as the church. And that service begins here with one another. And we'll make all this clear as we go along.

As I say, this is part three of four. Another reason that I wanted to bring this message, series of messages to you right now is COVID. Now, Christians across the country are on all kinds of plain spectrums and polls about COVID protocols.

And I'm in contact with a number of pastors around the nation through various means. And it is a sad and tragic thing that we are seeing so many Christians divided over COVID protocols.

[2 : 44] Masks, vaccinations, you name it. It's sad and it's unnecessary. And so I wanted to bring this series of messages to help us put the priority on selflessness and service.

If in our desire to safeguard our views about these various issues in COVID, we lose a servant hearted, servant minded approach to life with our brothers and sisters and our witness in the world.

We're headed in the wrong direction. And so we need to check that and we need to bring it against scripture. So as always, this is not Greg's opinion or my opinion. I'm going to try to keep you in the scriptures today.

I'm going to use a number of things that I've been saying over the past two Sundays as talking points for me to give you a greater view of how some of these things might work out in the life of the church.

And why some of these things are critically important. And why some of these things that I've been talking about over the last couple of weeks have been let go in many churches. And what the effect has been in letting these priorities go.

[4 : 00] The priority of the local church and the priority of serving in the local church. What does the scripture have to say about that? Why is it important in the life of the church? I've just given you a couple of reasons.

This is a way that we all come together and unify ourselves around truth and not personal opinion. This is how we challenge one another in selflessness, self-denial and reach out across the aisles to each other in service to one another.

Now, if you don't believe that we're being affected by this, I would ask you when this service is over to grab just a few people and say, have you guys been affected by any of this recently?

And find out who in this congregation is being dramatically affected by this. This is important and it's critical for our day and time. So the title of my message is Concerned for Christ Centered Service.

I'm speaking of that specifically within the local church within the context of these messages. And as I've mentioned, this is part three. Now, in the last message that I preached, we saw that Jesus saved the apostle Paul, made Paul a minister of the gospel, and put Paul into service to the church.

[5 : 20] So Paul is saved to serve. And in serving the church, he serves the Lord Jesus Christ. Those things have to be kept together for us to maintain a biblical perspective on what service in the church is.

What it isn't is earning the favor of God. What it isn't is proving to each other or to the Lord that we have religious zeal. The Jews had that and crucified the Messiah.

No, it's none of those things. Service in the church is all about loving the Lord Jesus Christ. He is our motive. He is our reason. He is our purpose.

He is our goal. It's all for him, through him, in him, by him, and to him, that we serve one another in the church. Serving the church, then, is serving the body of the Lord Jesus Christ.

That's how we're referred to, yes? We are the body of the Lord Jesus Christ. So, just as much as persecuting the church is persecuting Jesus, which Paul once did before Jesus saved him, so serving the church is serving the Lord Jesus Christ.

[6 : 42] Folks, it's that basic. It's that fundamental. Serving the church is serving the Lord. You don't serve the church. You're neglecting Jesus. No matter what you say with your mouth.

No matter how many religious rituals you go through. The bottom line is turning that love for Christ into a love for his people through a practical application of service.

So, one practical application, then, for this, for us, is that we see that we are also saved and put into the family of God.

What does the scripture call that? Adoption. We are adopted and put into the family of God. So that, here's the purpose, so that we are also saved to serve.

Now, one of the problems that we face in this as Christians is the individualistic nature that we bring to this idea. We want to individualize our salvation, and Americans are particularly prone to this.

[7 : 45] It's important that God saved you as an individual. That's critical. It's important that as an individual, you trusted in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior.

Yes? As an individual, that's critical. But it doesn't stop there. It starts there. That's just the beginning. You are saved to serve.

You're put into the family of God to serve. Whereas, once you served your master, Satan, now you serve your new master, Jesus.

Whereas, once you served self, now you serve others while you deny self. And that others starts with the one another's of Christian community.

This is where you come in and practice and put into practice service. You hone it. Refine it. Move through it.

[8 : 49] Make mistakes in it. You're admonished in it. Perhaps even rebuked in it and corrected in it and affirmed in it. And that whole thing gets refined in here in the blender of the church family.

And then we go out there and kind of pour it out on others. This is a good place for this to happen. Now, I want to do one more caveat as I say this to you.

No one in here is being targeted by these messages. Okay, beloved? You're not. I don't do that. You talk to my brother, my wife.

I don't know that I've ever been guilty of targeting. Let me tell you when I target. It's when I show up at your house and say, can we talk? Now you're being targeted. From the pulpit, I'm just trying to put us all on the same page and affirm walking in the Lord in this.

All right? So, the last thing that I said to you was serving the Lord Jesus is serving the church as we serve in love together. To neglect serving in the church is to neglect the Lord.

[9 : 53] So, here's my first little thing for the slide up here. This is from Dr. MacArthur. Every act of compassion and self-sacrifice on behalf of our brethren and sisteren is a practical means of displaying the love of Christ.

Amen and well said. Now, our new nature in Jesus makes us servants of one another. Now, I hope you caught that.

To serve one another is natural to your new nature. It's not part of your old nature. We always served in our old nature with an agenda, our own.

Our agenda in serving one another is the agenda of Jesus. It's plain and simple. So, serving each other flows from following our Lord and Savior.

That's important. Your service to one another flows from your love for Christ and from your fellowship in Jesus. Again, you're not doing it to convince God you're real or to prove to God that saving you was a good idea or to earn his favor.

[11 : 11] Remember, you're serving in the church because you love Jesus and Jesus is teaching you to love the church. Now, we can slip into a mentality that puts serving in the church on a par with worldly ideas.

That's largely what this message is about. Worldly ideas of membership in something. Now, just follow what I say.

We can say things like this. This is just hitting on a little bit of what I said last time. We can say things like this. Well, they're just volunteers. Meaning you.

People in the congregation. They're just volunteers. Or we can say this. We can't ask too much of our volunteers. Or we just can't seem to get anyone to volunteer for this or that in the church.

All right? Volunteerism creates a wrong-footed way of serving in the church. It dumbs down God's standard.

[12 : 24] If you think about it, if you're saved and put into service, saved to serve, then we do away with volunteerism.

There aren't any volunteers. Did you volunteer to get saved? All right. You weren't put into the Lord in a volunteer way. God hunted you down. Right?

And against your rebellious heart, he saved you. Thank the Lord. I tell people all the time, I'm glad God overcame my stubborn will. Do it all day long, Lord.

And then retrain my will to desire what you desire for me. Let my desires be those desires that most please you. And we spend a lifetime learning that.

And, beloved, we need each other to do that. I need you. Greg needs you. As pastors, we need you in our life. And you need us.

[13 : 25] And we need each other. We are so individualized and Americanized in this attitude that to receive service from other people is sometimes is like pulling teeth.

Or it feels like we're being too needy. Or what. All life in the church is about serving one another.

That's what it is. And we don't want to dumb it down. And I said more about that last time. So I'm not going to cover that ground again. But while we never want to create the idea or the experience of serving to earn God's favor or prove our religious zeal, we do want to keep the bar set at the height that the Bible puts it.

So the Bible tells us to think much, much higher about being a member of a local church and serving in that body of believers. And that's what we're laboring to understand in our thinking.

So the Apostle Paul then is our example from Colossians. He writes from prison to the Colossian church. Nothing about Paul's commitment to serve the Colossians or the church at large is easy or convenient or comfortable for Paul as he writes from prison.

[14 : 52] But he even uses his time in prison to serve these people in whatever ways, hear this, are most beneficial to them. Are most beneficial to them.

He's willing and eager for God to use him to help these people grow in Christ likeness. That's Paul's ultimate objective.

That he will spend himself to see others grow in likeness to Jesus Christ. That's a day to day thing for Paul.

And it's very convicting, isn't it? It's very convicting to read Paul's testimony of giving himself to the priority of the church.

So when we talk about the priority of the local church, what then are we talking about? All right. We're talking about Paul's emphasis on serving Jesus as we then serve each other in the body life here at Grace Church.

[15 : 51] The local church is God's priority. Now, I know you could look at me and say, Jeff, you've given your adult life to the local church.

We expect you to be passionate and say things like that. Well, I'm trying to show you in scripture this is the normal Christian life. To be passionate about the Christian church, the local church, that is your testimony in Christ.

These are your brothers and sisters. These are the people who will spend eternity with you. They're worth anything and everything you can put into them. Why? Why?

Are you going to hear this carefully? Because Jesus is worth it. Because Jesus is worth it. Your service to these people is service to Christ. He's worth it.

One day, you may want to serve me and I'm grumpy. I don't want to be, but I might be. So in that moment, maybe I'm not so easy to serve. Have you ever served someone and it's messy?

[16 : 53] Have you ever served someone and it costs you? You ever served someone and have to swallow hard to keep doing it? And you smile through your teeth? Yeah. Jesus is worth it.

We make it tough. So let's ask this. Let's put this up on the slide and let's ask this as we move into this together. Are we gaining a sense of God's value and priority for serving within the context of the local church?

Because there are all kinds of things negatively influencing the way we think about and respond to this question. I'll highlight just a couple of them in this message.

I'm using Colossians 1, 24 through 29 to lay out what I'm calling four marks. Four marks or features of Christ-centered, Christ-pleasing service in the local church.

And today I'm going to pull together some strands I've been talking about and try to keep us all well grounded in the main idea of the passage. Colossians 1, beginning in verse 24.

[18 : 01] After Paul has done this wonderful introduction about his prayers for the people and how Jesus has brought them from the kingdom of darkness and transferred them into the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, he goes into this wonderful accounting from verse 15 down about the supremacy of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior over all things.

Boy, it's just magnificent. If you're ever in the doldrums, if you're ever down, if you're ever doubting, if you're ever in a moment of weakness, turn to Colossians 1 and start reading in verse 15.

And just keep reading it over and over again down through the next four or five verses. Put your mind on Jesus. So he comes to verse 24 and he says this.

Now, in the New American Standard, Now, I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake. And in my flesh, I do my share on behalf of his body.

His body what, Paul? Where's his body? Which is the church. In filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions. Of this church, I was made a minister.

[19 : 14] According to the stewardship from God bestowed on me for your benefit, so that I might fully carry out the preaching of the word of God. That is, the mystery which has been hidden from the past ages and generations, but has now been manifested to his saints.

To whom God willed to make known, to reveal, to open to us, what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles of all people.

The Gentiles, yeah. Which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. Well, wait a minute. Christ in the Gentiles? So that they now have a hope of glory?

Absolutely. That's being revealed now. And so in verse 28, Paul says, We proclaim him, Jesus, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ.

For this purpose also I labor, striving according to his power which mightily works within me. Now, over the last couple of messages, I'm wearing out verses 24 and 25, laying all the groundwork for what will be the final message, God willing, next week, when we'll take the remainder of this passage, and I'll talk about what's going on.

[20 : 36] But I've tried to be very, very careful and very specific in my objective of laying this groundwork for you. It's kind of like when you want to go out and plant something in your yard.

Lord, the most important element of planting anything in your yard, you horticulturists and gardeners can tell me and back me up on this, it's soil preparation. If you don't prepare the soil, you put fertilizer, do whatever else you want to do, you're not going to have a good yield or whatever it is that you're planting.

So I'm preparing the soil for us. That's what we're doing. And then, Lord willing, we'll get to the final part of it next Sunday. So now we can deal with the second marker feature.

I've spent two Sundays just on the first one. The second marker feature of Christ-centered service, and it's Paul's emphasis on the context of our service in the local church.

Now, I've hit this back and forth and all around. It's the context of the local church. The first was the character of that service in the church.

[21 : 44] Now it's the context. The character and context of this service are intertwined. So I'll put this slide up there. Let's do the next one. We need to have and to apply God's emphasis on the primacy of the local church for our Christ-centered service to one another.

It's our privilege and our mandate. And so we ask, how can I bring my talents and my gifts and my resources to serve the local church as I seek to serve the Lord Jesus?

Keep those together. So the context of Christ-centered service is number two in this little outline. It'll be four points by the time I'm finished.

Once again, as we reflect on verses 24 and 25, Paul says, I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake.

And in my flesh, I do my share on behalf of his body, the church, in filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions. And then in verse 25, of this church, I was made a minister.

[23 : 01] And he was made a minister according to this stewardship. We've unpacked all of that together. All those different words, minister. We saw the Greek word for that.

Stewardship. All of that done. God bestowed on me, he says, notice for your benefit. This is for your sake and for your benefit so that I might carry out the preaching of the word of God.

For whose sake is Paul suffering? For whose benefit has God bestowed a stewardship on Paul? And the answers are for your sake in verse 24, for your benefit in verse 25.

In both cases, he's specifically referring to the Christians who make up the local church there in Colossae. Now, I want to show you the heart of the apostle Paul in this so that you can just get a taste.

There are so many places I could take you in the Bible to show you this in Paul's letters. I just want to take you to a couple of them, all right? If you turn to 2 Corinthians, there's all kinds of people that you probably are like me.

[24 : 11] I wish that I could meet, you know, and talk to now. Sit down and have a conversation with about different things that happen in Scripture. Of course, Jesus is one of them.

Paul would be another. Just to sit at this man's feet for 12 hours, because that's nothing for him. You talk about a preacher, right, Ron? He could preach 12 hours.

I mean, he preaches so much, a guy falls out of the window and gets dead. And Paul goes down and brings him back to life. Anyway, 2 Corinthians 1, 6 and 7.

But if we are afflicted, it is for your comfort. Notice, if we are afflicted, it's for your comfort and salvation.

Or if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which is effective in the patient enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer.

[25 : 13] And our hope for you is firmly grounded, knowing that as you are sharers of our suffering, so also you are sharers of our comfort. This is Paul's attitude in ministry.

Suffering and comfort being shared by the people who love Jesus Christ. 2 Corinthians 1, 6 and 7.

And then if you'll stay in 2 Corinthians, that's the beginning. Now go all the way back to the back of 2 Corinthians in chapter 12. He's just about to close out the book.

And in chapter 12, he says this. In verse 14, For the third time I am ready to come to you, and I will not be a burden to you.

This was something that Paul was very concerned about. For I do not seek what is yours, but you. Paul says, I want a relationship with you.

[26 : 13] It's you I'm seeking. For children aren't responsible to save up for their parents, but parents for their children. And Paul was the spiritual father of these people, having spent all this time with them, growing them in the Lord.

But now look at verse 15 and how he sums it all up. I will most gladly spend and be expended for your souls.

Friends, that's the benchmark. And we would never dumb that down. That's the benchmark.

And who was Paul following and saying that to these people? Christ. Christ was his example, going to the cross and suffering to death on behalf of these people.

That's the heart of the Apostle Paul. So back to Colossians. For your sake. Of his body, which is the church.

[27 : 13] Of this church. For your benefit. All these different phrases and clauses all speak of the context of the local church. The church at large.

Yes. It does apply to Paul's ministry to the church, capital C, at large. Yes. But particularly the local church. And in this case, in this context, the believers at Colossae.

Now I'm hammering that point with you so that you can see very, very clearly that I'm not making a mountain out of a molehill. I'm bringing out of the text the priority that God puts on serving the church.

Even to the point of Paul saying, I will most gladly spend and be completely used up for your souls. Paul was like, that's not a biggie.

I've already made up my mind that you're worth it. That Jesus is worth it. And that's what service is. So what specific stewardship of service has God bestowed on you for the benefit of these people?

[28 : 17] We're constantly asking that. And folks, can I encourage you with this? That's an ebb and flow reality. One of the reasons that we don't marry ourselves to programs in our church is we want to be able to see and measure when are those programs effective and have run their shelf life and need something else to step in.

We don't mind killing programs. We don't mind that, right? Some programs will work good for a little bit. When I say program, I'm talking about a ministry in the church.

There are some ministries that don't have a shelf life. What would be one of the ministries that doesn't have a shelf life? The pulpit ministry. We're always centered and teaching sound doctrine, right?

The one and others of scripture, those ministries. But those ministries in the one and others can flex. They flex with where the church is at any given time in its life.

The church changes and morphs because it's a living organism. So we hold loosely in our allegiance to the ministries or programs and we hold more tightly to God's commands, admonishments, God's affirmations to us to serve one another, to be spent and be expended on behalf of each other.

[29 : 39] And that's what we want to be able to do. So in what ways then, beloved, are you responding in obedience to God by investing yourself in service to this body of believers so that they are benefited by your involvement?

Again, we're not serving in the church to prove to God anything. We're serving in the church in faithfulness for the benefit of your brothers and sisters.

This is bigger than you, goes beyond you, but you're important in it. All right, how about this slide up here?

Let's put this one up. How are we to think biblically about spiritual family life? How are we to think biblically about spiritual family life?

Well, consider this. Church life bridges the gap for us between living in this world and in our heavenly home and our life to come. Church life bridges that gap.

[30 : 45] Now, let me ask you, you're going to get church life out there? You're going to get the emphasis of faithfulness to Christ out there? You're going to get that in here. What are you going to get in heaven?

Who's going to be the centerpiece of heaven? Christ. That's exactly what it should be here, isn't it? I'm not the star. You're not the star. We're not the collective star.

Greg's not. Jesus is the star. Jesus is the Lord of the church. And so that's who we honor in all of this. So church, hear me carefully over these next few statements.

Church is who we really are. It's not what we just do. It's who we really are. We are the church, the body of Christ.

So we are strangers here. When we step out of here and go out there, we are in foreign territory.

[31 : 43] Now we must go. Don't get me wrong. We must go. But we must go as the church. As the church.

As God's mobilized spiritual force. Spiritual means of the Holy Spirit. We are of the Holy Spirit people.

We are an of the Holy Spirit family. Now I'm going to dare say something here. I'm going to dare say that it is unlikely that some of the friendships being forged in this community of believers would never be forged outside of this community of faith.

out there, you guys may never meet or be friends. In here, all boundaries, all boundaries pale into insignificance for love of Jesus.

That's what makes us special. We love Jesus and he's teaching us to love each other. That's why we want all kinds of different people in here that look different from us, that sound different from us, that come from different backgrounds than we do.

[33 : 02] Right? Bring it on. And then watch Jesus forge those different people into a moving body of family life where they genuinely love one another and want to be with one another and invest in one another.

And the world looks in and says, how in the world does that work? Right? It works because of Jesus. I remember telling Greg a while back when we were trying to reach into the Hispanic community and we were trying to get a particular body of believers who were without sound instruction to join us and to give us an opportunity to, and I was going to try to meet with them by myself to just build relationship with them.

And do you know why that didn't work out? Language. Language. Now, I'm not putting down the barrier of language, but I said, you know what? We'll work it out.

Come be the body with us. We'll figure it out. I don't know Spanish. I can't preach in Spanish, but we'll find somebody to help us. And we'll figure it out.

Come be the body of Christ with us. We can't let culture divide us. We can't let culture keep people out of here.

[34 : 27] We can't. It's not right. We can't let skin color. We can't let political views. We can't let where we are in COVID protocols.

We can't. We're supposed to be diverse as we all look to one Lord for one life and for one hope.

So I'll say it this way. There is life in the church and life in the world. There's both. You live in both. So do I. There's life in the church and life in the world.

Now look, as the church, we are in the world, but not of the world, right? Stay with me now. As a member of God's family, the church, what is the significance of you being in the world, but not of the world as it relates to your Christ-centered service to one another?

I'm in the world, but I'm not of it, and what does that have to do with my service in a local church? Let me take you to John chapter 15, and we'll just give some hints to this.

[35 : 48] John 15, and I'll begin reading in verse 18. If the world hates you, you know that it has hated me before it hated you.

If you were of the world, the world would love its own, but because you are not of the world, because I chose you out of the world, because of this, the world hates you.

Why does the world hate Christians? Because Jesus chose us out of the world. He says it right there. For this reason, they hate you, because you belong to me, and they hated me too.

So, that means we're supposed to hate them back. No. No. Did Jesus hate them back? No.

Then if you'll look over at John 17. John 17, beginning in verse, let's see, 13.

[37 : 05] But when he, the spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth. For he will not speak on his own initiative, but whatever he hears, he will speak.

And he will disclose to you what is to come. He will glorify me, for he will take of mine and will disclose it to you. All things that the Father has are mine.

Therefore, I said that he takes of mine and will disclose it to you. So, there is scripture being revealed and written by these apostles. These men.

Now, look at verse 16. A little while, and you will no longer see me. And again, a little while, and you will see me. Some of the disciples then said to one another, what is this thing he's telling us?

They don't understand. A little while, you will not see me. And again, a little while, and you will see me. And because I go to the Father. So, they were saying, what is it that he says?

[37 : 58] A little while. We don't know what he is talking about. Sorry, I'm reading in chapter 16, aren't I? Still good. Let me go a little further.

Jesus knew that they wished to question him and he said to them, are you deliberating together about this that I said a little while? Truly, I say to you, you'll weep and lament in verse 20, but the world will rejoice.

You will grieve, but your grief will be turned into joy. One of the reasons that that's important is because it helps counter what he just said about the world hating us.

We're going to find in Christ the ultimate comfort that only he can bring us after living in a hostile environment for so long. Now, folks, listen, that's an eternal perspective on life and it's critical.

It's critical for us not to go out there and get beaten up and lose hope and become discouraged. There is a greater reality about being put into the family of God and that greater reality is I have an eternal hope.

[39 : 04] This is going to end. It has a shelf life and it's, what does God say? It's the blink of an eye in the greater reality of all eternity. So we need to think heaven.

We need to think heaven. All right, now let's do 17. 17, 13. But now I come to you and these things I speak in the world so that they may have my joy made full in themselves.

I have given them your word and the world has hated them because they are not of the world even as I am not of the world. I do not ask you to take them out of the world but to keep them from the evil one.

They are not of the world even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in your truth. Your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I send them into the world.

For their sakes, I sanctify myself that they themselves also may be sanctified in the truth. So he's praying for the apostles, for the disciples to be effective in their ministry of taking this now being written word into their world and lay the foundation for what you and I will come to believe and then in verse 20 he begins to pray for us as well.

[40 : 23] If you'll also go back to Colossians and look at chapter 1 beginning in verse 21. Colossians 1.21 And although you were formally alienated and hostile in mind and engaged in evil deeds.

Now there you go. That was your former way of life. Even if you were saved at six years old. Right? Although you were formally alienated, hostile in mind, engaged, yet he has now reconciled you in his fleshly body through death in order to present you before him holy and blameless and beyond reproach.

That's a big difference between formally alienated and now what you are. Right? Then in verse 23, if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you've heard which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven and of which I, Paul, here it is again, was made a servant.

Made a servant. And then one more I'll give you. One more that helps put perspective on all of this in the world but not of the world attitude that we have as we serve one another and serve them.

It's in 1 John 2 beginning in verse 15. 1 John 2 15 through 17. Hear it carefully, beloved.

[42 : 04] Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the boastful pride of life is not from the Father but is from the world.

The world, here's putting it in perspective, the world is passing away. So all that sinful stuff is passing away and also it's lusts.

But the one who does the will of God lives forever. This is an active faith. The one who does the will of God. Notice he didn't say just believes in Jesus.

Critical, but that's not what he says here. Does the will of God. Only those who love and trust Christ do the will of Christ. Now why all of this?

Let's put this slide up here. The next one, Michelle, Pedro, whoever. We are of God in Christ.

[43 : 08] We were friends of this world which made us aliens and strangers to God. now in Christ we are friends of God so that we have become aliens and strangers in the world.

You see how that reversed? That's why I wanted to put this up here. It's hard to say and conceptualize. Jesus reversed that whole thing. Is it up there? Go back one.

Boom. There it is. So we have been transferred to a different realm. We have been relocated spiritually from belonging to one world to now belonging to the opposite world.

Romans 6 has a lot to say about this. But since you're in Colossians look at verse 13 chapter 1 for he rescued us.

Isn't that beautiful? For he rescued us. What did he rescue us from? Drop down and look at verse 21. And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind and engaged in evil deeds that's what he rescued you from.

[44 : 27] For he rescued us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved son in whom we have redemption the forgiveness of sins.

That's the groundwork for service in the church. That's the groundwork and the foundation for loving one another in Christ and giving our lives on behalf of one another.

We have been transported as it were into a different spiritual realm and made children of the living God. So how does this bear on our relationship of service to one another here in our church?

think about this question with me. Do we want and need to bring world life into the church or church life into the world?

Which do you think it is? The latter. And yet and yet it's sad and tragic to say one of the reasons I'm reading all this about the world to you and the difference that we have in living in this world and not being of it is this.

[45 : 41] The church has been guilty for decades of bringing more and more of the world's philosophies and ideas into how it thinks about being who it is and that is tragic and it has had no small devastating effect on evangelicalism over the last at least 40 years as I can trace it back and listen to my mentors talk about it.

I've been a Christian now for 40 years. Look at this look at this slide this is the one that do nothing from selfish or empty conceit but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another is more important than himself.

Don't merely look out for your own personal interests but also for the interests of others. Now you see this on billboards all over our community you see this on TV and ads you see it on television shows our shows are full of this kind of selflessness this kind of giving to others this kind of sacrifice come on that's right it's not it's just the opposite isn't it yes and you see the point the point's been made now what do they know about any of this they don't you didn't either before the Lord Jesus you didn't know I didn't know I sure didn't know do we need more like the world in how we think about and do family life marriage parenting working our jobs making money serving considering each other no if we are more worldly minded than biblically minded in our views and actions about serving here at grace we will not serve selflessly and sacrificially as stewards of Jesus

Christ we won't the more we bring the world's ideas into here the less service goes on and the more it gets about being busy and if you get busy you can convince yourself that being busy is being spiritual that being busy is loving Jesus and that is not necessarily true and we need to be careful I'm just calling for discernment it's why I'm pointing you to scripture and spending three messages and two verses I told you I could have preached at least that many for the word now in verse 24 now that's just pregnant with meaning we see and learn and we are reinforced in godly thinking and living primarily through life lived together in the local church through the times of gathering as we worship together as we serve one another and as we build up one another in the family family of god so can I put this slide up there for them next living life as the grace church family is where we learn about and practice serving as god's family so that we can then then get get this in proper order then take our church life our family of god life our service to one another life out there where selflessness sacrifice and suffering on behalf of Jesus are totally foreign all right now let's take an example I promised you I'd do this let's take a quick example of how world life is affecting the church today because the world is alluring it's alluring look sin is alluring if it wasn't you wouldn't do it there's a certain payoff and pleasure to worldliness and to sin right what it doesn't tell you is how you're drinking poison little by little it's just like taking the acid little bit by little bit so your body doesn't completely reject it right at first until you get enough of it in you that eat your insides out that's what worldliness does that's what it'll do to the church so let's take an example of that alluring thing because what happens is when

God's people begin to drift away from a high view of God and a high view of his word they reach out and fill the void with the world do you do that in your life can you be guilty of that in your life if you don't have a high view of God and a high view of the Bible you're going to fill that your life up with something it's either going to be truth or you or the things of the world but something's going to fill it that's the same with the church let me give you an example this has happened as churches have become more concerned this is just one example folks I'm going to try to make this practical for you I know that there are people in this church at different levels of spiritual maturity some of you are going to resonate with this when you hear it and go yeah I knew that others are going to go man I'm glad he gave that as an example and then I'm going to tell you why I did it all right this is happening all over in churches if they've become more concerned with their leaders leaders being good businessmen instead of being godly shepherds so I'm going to put this up here for you so you can see it worldly CEOs chief executive officers are replacing godly CEOs called equipped overseers professionals are replacing pastors and I say that with great sadness but I'd like for you to look with me just as a quick survey of the emphasis that scripture puts on godly CEOs

[51 : 47] CEOs called equipped ministers of the gospel an overseer is the same or synonymous word with pastor and shepherd so we have elders pastors overseers those are terms that the bible uses interchange interchangeably for pastors like Greg and I all right first timothy 3 first timothy three beginning in verse one it is a trustworthy statement if any man aspires to the office of pastor overseer shepherd elder it is a fine work look he desires to do any man who doesn't desire and aspire to this work which is probably a better way of speaking about this my brother Ron here is a pastor it may be a better way for us to understand pastoring instead of talking about it so much as a calling as this is something that we aspire to we desire God puts that desire within us I tried I told you a few sermons ago I tried to run from that I was a coward and I tried to run from from that that God was putting in my heart to serve the church and it didn't work out well for me until I turned to the

Lord so this is a man who desires to be a pastor he's not being forced or coerced now notice what he says an overseer a pastor or an elder then having that desire must be above reproach he must be beyond the accusation of habitual sin in his life or or sin sin that would disqualify him in this desire to serve the church he must be the husband of one wife that is he must be a faithful man to his wife he must be temperate prudent respectable hospitable able to teach not addicted to wine or pugnacious but gentle peaceable free from the love of money he must be one who manages his own household well that makes sense keeping his children under control with all dignity but if a man doesn't know how to manage his own household how is he going to take care of the church of God so for a called man a pastor his church is the proving ground and the practice ground for the shepherding that he does in the church the way that I shepherd my wife and shepherd my family has everything to do with the way I shepherd the church I used to say to people when my kids were in our home before we raised and launched them when I would interview for the pastorate with some church or talk to younger guys about ministry I'd say to him I am careful to tell churches I'm going to shepherd you just like I shepherd my family I don't come into the church and put on preacher robes and then change my voice to the preacher voice and talk I don't do that you get Jeff you get the same Jeff in the house in the pulpit that's I'm just Jeff and I'm just I'm up here doing my contribution to serving and so I remember when I interviewed with the committee to come to the to what was this church that we launched out of I remember talking to them and and saying to them I just have one request to come here just one and it's this let me be

Jeff but now let me tell you what that means you've got to let me preach the word with every fiber of my being and you've got to let me call the people of God to live that word that's it you just let me be Jeff and we started they were here we started from day one like that didn't we just let me be that's that's who I am I won't do it all the time super well I'll make mistakes and all but let me be Jeff if you look over at Titus real quickly Titus has a similar list these are letters that Paul's writing to these young protégés these young men in the faith who are aspiring in the pastoral role Titus is on the Isle of Crete Timothy is at Ephesus and so now we transfer over to Titus 1 beginning in verse 5 for this reason I left you in

Crete here's the the purpose that he wants Titus to serve there that you would set in order what remains and appoint elders pastors overseers in every city as I directed you so every city that has a church Titus is responsible to go and find these aspiring godly men namely if any man is above reproach here here's the resume this is what they need to look for if he's above reproach the husband of one wife children who believe not accused of dissipation or rebellion the overseer must be above reproach is God's steward not self-willed quick-tempered addicted to wine pugnacious fond assorted gain but hospitable loving what's good he needs to be a sensible man a just man a devout man a self-controlled man and he needs to hold fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and refute those who contradict now that sounds like a stable guy right that also sounds to me like a guy with some age on him he doesn't have to be as old as I am but this is a guy who's who's gotten some blood on his uniform this is a guy who's gone out and he understands what it means to suffer and to sacrifice on behalf of the people of God and he's not shocked by that I remember when I first got out of seminary and got into my first church it shocked me I told you

I was ready for the world to beat me up but I wasn't ready for the church to beat me up this is a seasoned person now listen carefully please beloved as I move move toward the end here today today having read those with me to see what the standard is did you catch that 99% of all of those qualifications have to do with character there was only one item in that list that was he must be able to do the rest of it was this is who he must be and the one do in that entire list for an elder he must be able to teach instruct God's people how he must be able to exhort in sound doctrine and refute now listen today church leadership is not about godly character and it's not about fidelity to sound doctrine on the whole it's not I'm sorry it's not here here's here's what we're finding increasingly the demand is for dynamic communicators willing and adept at employing worldly means to get and keep people coming to the services and activities church goers are consumers so we have to give the consumers what they want or they won't come back and consumers are picky picky people have mercy you've got as many opinions in the church as you do consumers and they're all willing to line up and tell you about it here is just a small list of the spiritual fallout and I when I wrote this I wept here's the spiritual fallout churches succumb to and I can tell you there's not a thing on this list I'm about to tell you that I haven't seen firsthand and had to deal with church attendance is voluntary so come as long as you don't have anything more important going on membership and accountability aren't required because church is an optional Sunday event and because personal commitment is asking too much of volunteers so keep the sermon short entertaining and non-threatening to the sensitivities of people whose differing opinions about God and religion need to be honored or they won't come back consequently the bar for personal holiness is kept very low sin is not discussed sin is not mortified sin is not disciplined and so not holiness but personal happiness is the measure of any effective ministry do I go out with a warm fuzzy did it make me laugh humanistic psychology passes for discipleship doctrine is seen as divisive and avoided and so the Bible conviction of sin and teaching with depth are largely irrelevant and I could go on and on and on in part of my research a few weeks ago I had the

[61 : 54] painful experience of having to critique research and critique some of the most prominent and quote-unquote successful ministries for hurting people in evangelicalism today and the biggest one among people suffering from some type of harm or hurt in life it could be chemical abuse drug abuse sexual abuse it could be I was raised in a dysfunctional home who wasn't to anything if it's if it's troubling you you're welcome into this organization and it's called celebrate recovery now if you've been involved in that please don't be offended with me about this okay just hear me out it is the largest Christian recovery effort in the world it's worldwide it's in like 37,000 churches worldwide and the basic tenet of celebrate recovery is as a Christian you come in and you sit down in the group it's patterned after Alcoholics Anonymous a pagan organization you're not allowed to teach or correct or rebuke you all come in and sit down and you introduce yourself one by one hi I'm Jeff and I am a Christian child dealing with anger addiction to pornography alcohol abuse from my past abuse from my past hi Jeff and then I get to tell you what my week's been like or what's been going on in my life and you're supposed to affirm me whatever you hear you're supposed to find a way to affirm something that you hear from me and you can't teach rebuke or correct because that's called cross talk and cross talk's not allowed the environment is supposed to be one of welcoming and affirming you see anything wrong with that based on what you've been hearing for the last 45 minutes

I did too and I watched instance after instance of it that's how I started my training I cut my eye teeth in psychology doing that very thing with a group of men that's not going to make Jesus servants it's not going to do it the truth is speaking the truth in love is that's God's means to help us grow in Christ we have brought so much of the world into the church and convinced ourselves that it's the way to go so if you think with me think worship and priority in the application here worship and priority what is worship and what is the priority in worship we worship as we learn the truth of Christ do you believe you're worshipping right now?

you're worshipping as we learn the truth the priority then is living that truth as servants to Jesus Christ to His honor and glory not to our own in Celebrate Recovery the idea the basic tenet is that we will help you heal from your hurt and we will help you better function in life I don't want to function in life I want to be faithful in life and it's not semantics it's theology it's about living for the greater glory of God by living in the truth of the Lord Colossians 1 24 and 25 tell us that Paul is rejoicing in his sufferings for the sake of others so that in his flesh he is doing his share on behalf of the body which is the church he is filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions we explain what that means and of the church he says

I was made a minister according to the stewardship God bestowed on me for your benefit Paul didn't say he bestowed this on me so that I could be a premier apostle and convince the world and leave my mark on the world oh isn't that great the world will remember me for he says no so that I might fully carry out the preaching of the word of God that was his driving passion God's priority for the context of this learning and living is the local church and why is that so important let me put this slide up I've just got a couple more for you in gathering as a local church to learn God's truth and to be reinforced in it in gathering to worship according to this truth and in gathering to apply this truth in service to one another we show ourselves hearers heaters and doers of God's word so folks we're teachable we are humbly honoring God's priority of church life being our life in him my life in this body is my life in Christ but my life in Christ doesn't stop with me life life is me living for him and him living through me as he blesses you as I reach out to find practical ways to serve you and to sacrifice whatever is needed to see you grown in Christ likeness so our church life grounds us and encourages us in who we are and in our life together in Christ that's our church life and we take this into the world life the church life goes into the world life we're defined by the church life not the world life we evangelize and bless and sanctify those outside of church life here's what one other pastor said in the way of a final quote every week when we gather together to worship as the body of Christ we are practicing what it means to be followers of Jesus and we are preparing to be citizens of a heavenly kingdom and so Paul gives us the example of this for your sake he says that's the value

God places on establishing and building up the local church and it's our privilege to share in that same calling as we seek to invest ourselves in one another for the greater glory of the Lord Jesus man what a rich rich teaching well beloved God willing I have one more sermon for you and that sermon's got to cover 26 27 28 29 when I just did three sermons on just two verses it'll work it's all done it's done and dusted and ready the ink's dry on that one thank you for being attentive and for allowing me to share some of these strands that I've been hitting on over the last couple of weeks and bring I know this wasn't a typical message but next week we'll get back into the rehearsing of the exposition verse by verse together in the meantime pray for each other support one another build one another up in the faith and as these different protocols and different things come down to us reach out across the aisles and across the phone lines and whatever else to encourage one another okay and be prayerful for one another be prayerful alright let's pray together well father we honor your heart now and we thank you for the word of

[70 : 21] God and I thank you God for allowing me to have the opportunity to stand in the pulpit not preaching the opinions of men but trying to stay true to what your heart says as you've given us the Bible as you've used faithful men in the past to pen these words from the Holy Spirit such that everything that has been written in the past was written for our benefit and so we take this to heart and we want to be headers of this truth and allow it to make us doers so teach us father and help us by the power of the spirit to understand the application that we need to make each one of us in being faithful servants in having the priority that you have on your church your people and let us be willing increasingly willing to spend and be expended on behalf of each other that's what it's going to take father for us to be faithful in this world and so we look to you with great joy earnestness and expectation in Jesus name we pray amen