

The Followship of Growth in Christ: Walking to Please Jesus

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[0:00] I think we'll have some more come in. I always say that. And they always do. That's because I'm a prophet. Or not.

Don't stone me. Okay. Let's pray together this evening and thank God for our time.

And we'll talk some more about what it means to love the Lord and be loved by Him as we seek to be conformed to Jesus. Let's pray.

Father, thank You for my dear friends and precious brothers and sisters in Christ that You've brought out this evening for this teaching. Lord, we are making every effort in the midweek to offer teaching from Scripture that helps us think carefully about who we are as Christian people, worshipers of the Lord Jesus.

And we want so much for the way this impacts us to change our life about our priorities, the way we treat relationships, what we value in life.

[1:17] So please use Your Word tonight not only to sober our souls, but to carry our souls to You so that we will love You with a deepening, abiding, dependent love.

Help us to love You the way Scripture talks about. And tonight especially, I pray that You will teach our souls what it means to please Jesus, to please the Lord and Savior who gave Himself for us.

We thank You for the Gospel. We thank You for the cross of Your Son. And we thank You as our good Father for doing what You've done to send Jesus to us so that we can have eternal life in His name.

We thank You for these blessings and look forward to what You're going to do in our hearts. In Christ's name, Amen. Amen. Amen. Well, this evening...

I'm going to have to adjust this thing. This evening, the followership of growth in Christ, you'll remember that we're talking about the overall idea of what it means for you and I as Christian people to begin in the momentum of what Jesus has laid.

[2:41] I keep coming over here now because I want to do the visual with you. The foundation. So over here, I've done the first few lessons talked about the foundation of our identity in Jesus. That we've been made new creatures in Christ.

We're new people. We have many of the same issues that we had before we were saved with one major difference.

That major difference is that now the Holy Spirit lives in you. And that is what completely redefines you. Because now, with the Holy Spirit living in you as the seal of God's guarantee that you belong to Him, nothing in the universe is powerful enough to undo the newness that God has built into you in the Spirit.

The Spirit will never leave you, will he, Dora? He will never leave you. So this is what we live in in the foundation of Jesus. Now, what we're talking about in the last few lessons is what it looks like for that new foundation to be put into motion.

This is the momentum of the Christian life. Now, I wish, and you do too, that we could say that that momentum was on an upward trajectory toward heaven and it never wavered from that upward curve, right?

[4:06] But what does it feel like when we live the Christian life? Does it feel like we're always on that upward curve? No. Sometimes it's a stumble down, we feel two steps back kind of thing.

This is the reality. Now, that is one of the reasons it's so important, brothers and sisters, that we come over here and ground ourselves spiritually in the foundation because that never changes.

No matter what the trajectory looks like, if you're truly saved, there will be a constant up. It may do this, it may spit and sputter, but it is going up.

One thing that doesn't do that, one thing that is constant, is the foundation of your identity in Jesus. Who you are spiritually is sealed in the Spirit.

So that doesn't change. The fact that this over here is difficult and sometimes even a little bit dark, then that suggests to us why it's so important for us to continue to ground ourselves in the reality of who we are and then live from that.

[5:17] So now we're talking about the momentum that you build in Christian living. Now you have some enemies. Enemies that want to derail you in what you're doing in the way of that momentum so that you feel like this.

It sounds like this. You know, every time I feel like I start to get some traction in the Christian life, boom. And then I feel like, tear.

Or I feel like I'm on a roller coaster. Etc. You've heard these things? You've maybe experienced some of them? Alright. What are your enemies that are seeking to derail you?

We might say, because they can't unsave you. They can't change the foundation. They can't take a sledgehammer to the foundation and bust it up. They can't change it. You are who you are in Christ forever.

Doesn't that sound good? You are who you are in Jesus forever. Alright. But you have enemies that are going to come over here and try to do everything they can to derail you in that momentum.

[6:25] That's what I mean by followership. The momentum of Christian living. Alright. Who or what are those enemies? I'm thinking of three. Alright. The devil, ourselves, the flesh, remaining sin.

We'll talk about that tonight. What was it? The world. So the world, the flesh, and the devil. And they combine together and they work against this followership.

Again, the world, the flesh, and the devil can't steal your faith from you. They can't steal your salvation from you. When I say the faith, I mean your salvation. But they can serve to derail you in this followership reality.

So tonight, what I want to talk to you about is this idea of walking to please Jesus. Last week, we talked about walking with Jesus.

What do we mean from Scripture when we talk about walking with Jesus? And we talked about a worthy walk. Do you remember that? Some of that? A worthy walk.

[7:33] Now, a worthy walk is what we're interested in. So listen, please listen carefully. This is something very different from songs that talk about Jesus being our boyfriend.

You know, we sing songs like Jesus is my boyfriend. Well, Jesus ain't nobody's boyfriend. And that cheapens the grace of God in Christ.

And so we don't do, this is why I brought this up in my sermon, we don't do things like that because what we're doing up here is not about performing. What we're doing up here is a different P word.

It's prompting. We are prompting you as worship leaders. I'm a worship leader. Typically, we think about worship leading as the guy who's doing the song leading.

No, I'm a worship leader. I am preaching and teaching the word of God to prompt you in worship. We are prompting you in singing. You're the choir.

[8:37] One day, Grace may have a choir that comes up here and sings, but they're still, we might call them the choir, but they're still prompting you to worship the Lord. So not performing, prompting.

Big difference. That's a difference in the theological understanding of who the worshipers are and what Sunday's, the Lord's Day, is all about.

So as we come together as God's people, we are interested in honoring the Lord. And this connects to the idea of pleasing Jesus. A worthy walk pleases the Lord.

And I want to help you tonight to think more carefully and intentionally about living a life to please Jesus. It will help you as you think about the things that you do in your life, the goals that you set, the sin that you struggle with in your life.

If you're someone who's trying to focus on some spiritual changes in your life, the idea of walking to please Jesus can really, really advance you in that sanctification process.

[9:51] Alright? Let's start with a passage tonight, a verse tonight, a couple of verses. I'm going to put them up here on the screen just to save time. You're welcome to turn there in your Bibles if you'd like. By this, the love of God was manifested in us.

It was shown in us. God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might do what through Him? Live.

God has given us Christ so that we can live through Him. In this is love. Not that we love God, but that God loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation or satisfaction for our sins.

Propitiation. Satisfaction for our sins. Alright, I want to do a little... I'm going to make Greg happy now. I'm going to do a pop quiz. And this is from last week.

So for those of you who were here, this should be pretty easy. I'm one of those teachers. Everybody gets an A now. Matt. No? Was that the wrong verse? Four?

[11:04] Is it four? Chapter four? Thank you, Dora. Chapter four, nine and ten. Is that it? Thank you.

Thanks, Matt. So pop quiz. I almost forgot and went on to the next thing. They do this. They distract you so they won't have to take the quiz.

Look, I'm a professional student, man. All these years after high school trying to get these things sewn up. Alright, I know all the tricks. Okay, so pop quiz.

How would you sum up what it means to grow spiritually? Or how would you sum up a definition of spiritual growth?

Fruit. Fruit? Boy, that's concise. Thank you, Alonza. Huh? Fruit. You're going to some verses. You're thinking like what we did last time.

[12:05] Alright, what else? Michelle? Michelle? Okay. More like fruit. Okay. Yes. Which evidences the spiritual fruit that Alonza's speaking of.

Alright? Now let's do that again. So if we were going to define spiritual growth, if you're going to say that you're growing spiritually, or if you're going to aim at growing spiritually, you need to be able to understand what it is.

Spiritual growth, in a nutshell, according to Scripture and what I taught you last week and all those verses we looked at, spiritual growth can be summed up very simply in that you are increasingly being conformed to the image of Jesus Christ.

Another way to say that is you're increasingly displaying, manifesting, showing the character of Jesus in your life. This is why Alonza said fruit. So the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5 would be one of those areas you could look at.

Galatians 5, 22 and 23. Where the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, self-control. All of that list has to do with the character of Jesus.

[13:26] And so spiritual growth is about you and I demonstrating increasingly the character of Christ. Growing to become like Him. So I want to do that in the way that I'm married.

I want to do that in the way I parent. I want to do that in the way that I treat people. The way that I think about the different aspects of my life, issues of my life.

Is all of that coming under the Lordship of Jesus Christ? So that I'm showing His character more and more. All right. Any questions on that definition?

We good on that? Okay. I'll put this up here. This is the question I was just moving on. How would you sum up what it means for a Christian to grow in Christ?

Growth in Christ means that we are becoming more like Jesus in all we think, say, and do. That's the concise version. Okay, now look at this.

[14:34] Paul sums up our spiritual growth in this particular way. He says, My children, with whom I am again in labor until, notice, Christ is formed in you from Galatians.

My children. He thinks of Himself as someone being in labor pains. You're my babies. And I'm your spiritual father and I'm in the process of like birthing you as I desire for you to be formed in Christ.

To be conformed. He wants to see this spiritual reality happening in His brothers and sisters. Now folks, I'll tell you, any true pastor's heart, that is His greatest passion in ministry.

Now I'm going to speak a word to you here as my family. That is His greatest passion in His ministry as a shepherd, as a pastor, is to see the people that He's ministering to having Christ formed in them.

Now I want to ask you a question. What do you think is the greatest heartbreak for any true pastor? Given what I just told you, what do you think would be the greatest heartbreak?

[15:59] Okay. For somehow, in some way or ways, the people that I'm serving, Greg's serving as pastors, would in some way demonstrate not only a lack of growth, but the greatest heartache would be someone who gives up on Christ being formed in them.

That's hard to live with. It's hard to see people come and go and not stay and partake of what we're offering.

Greg and I don't have the attitude or heart that says we're the only church in Williamsburg doing it right. We've never said that.

We don't think that. We're the only church in Williamsburg that he and I pastor. And so we are determined to get it right. That's how we pastor.

That's how we shepherd. That's what we're interested in. And so when God's people are demonstrating a defeated kind of heart in their walk with the Lord, there's really nothing to a true pastor more heartbreaking than that.

[17:25] It's hard to see you suffer. It's one thing to see you suffer physically, to see you suffer in some of the issues of life, but when we see you struggling and suffering, with your walk, that's particularly difficult.

So if we go into hyper mode, when that starts happening, it's because we care. Right? We don't want you to be one of the hundred that falls away and so now we leave the ninety-nine.

We will do that. But I don't want you to be that one that's slipping back. Carolyn? Carolyn? It just comes to me that you can't blame yourself for the world.

It's so dependent on what you're feeding on. Yeah. And you're feeding on this world and care and suffering and sleeping. You will wait.

Yes. Because I don't know the people that are crying in my life, but they were trying to do it. They were trying to do it themselves? Yeah. Because they thought, I need to go, it has to come from the world.

[18:42] That's what the world doesn't have to do. That's what they can do. Right. That was doing it. Yes. Yes. And you guys know that routine, right?

You felt what it's like to strive in your own power, only to find yourself in a deeper hole than before. One of the scriptures that I want to share in that way, it says this, God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong.

So you and I admitting that we're not strong is not biblical. It's biblical for us to say, you know, Lord, I don't have it within me, but I know Christ does.

Right? The base things of the world He chose. The despised God has chosen. Boy, I'll tell you what, that was me. Before I was saved, I was despised in the sight of the Lord because of my sin and my rebellion, my pride.

He's chosen those things. He's chosen the things that are not so that he may nullify the things that are so that no man may boast before God.

[20:06] Now get this, but by God's doing, you are in Christ Jesus who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption so that it is written, let him who boasts, boast in the Lord.

Then Paul goes on to say, our message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit, the Holy Spirit, and power because so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God.

Now that's the way we ought to teach and preach. So that people are being put in tune with the truth of the Word, so that they know that what God is doing in them is the power of the Spirit using the Word.

It's not the instrument or channel that it's coming through. Hopefully that will be skillful and it will be sincere and that kind of thing. Yes, cut it straight.

But at the end of the day, even a skilled preacher, if he's not using the Word, where's the power? Right? So this is what we want to do.

[21:20] It's all from the Lord. Alright, let me go to the next one here. To the Roman Christians, Paul wrote this, he described spiritual growth as God working all things to their good as they walk in love with the Lord so that they would be conformed to the image of His Son.

That's one we quote very often Romans 8, 28, 29. So the good in that verse, God works all things together for good. The good is defined by God in that same passage as conformity to Christ.

He will use everything, everything in your life, even the most difficult things, to His good purpose of conforming you to Jesus, refining you and conforming you to Jesus.

Even the hardest things that you face in life, even the dark things, the unknown things, the fearful things. God will use those things to conform you to His Son.

That's part of His walk with you as your Father. He's not going to turn His back on you because you're struggling. That's the kind of stuff we do to each other. That's not the Lord.

[22:38] Then to the Corinthian Christians, He described their spiritual growth as a process. A process of this. We all, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Holy Spirit.

That's 2 Corinthians 3.18. 2 Corinthians 3.18. So in each one of these passages that I've chosen, you see Christ being formed in you.

You hear in Romans, Paul talking about being conformed to the image of His Son, and then to the Corinthians being transformed into that same image, that is the image of the Lord Jesus.

Three different letters, the same theme for each one of these people that he's writing to. Now, question on this 2 Corinthians 3.18 one that we have up here right now.

Here's the question. Where do we behold the glory and majesty of Jesus? Since that's what we're talking about here, we are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory just as from the Lord.

[23:58] How does that happen? Where does that take place? The answer is this, in His Word, where He reveals Himself to us.

Scripture is the mirror reflecting the glory of Jesus to us. Now, you can see in this one why it is that your enemies want to work against you being in the Word of God.

Those three enemies that we mentioned all have the same goal in reference to God's Word, which is where Jesus is revealed, so that the more we take in His Word that is into our heart as hearers and heeders, the more that we take God's Word into our heart, the more we will reflect the character of Jesus in our life from glory to glory.

Increasing levels of character building in Christ and demonstrating that character. Satan works against that in you. Your flesh works against that in you.

Pride, whatever. And then the world. works against you. When was the last time you heard a song by the world or you saw a program or a movie or something else like that from the world that encouraged you to be conformed to Jesus Christ?

[25:18] Never. And you'll never see it. It won't happen. If you do see it, be suspicious of it. Why? Well, the world doesn't know anything about that.

Zippo. So if I see the world trying to mimic that, what? I'm like, hmm, what's this? What's the catch? You know, it's usually money.

Right now, in fact, that puts me to mind, right now, biblical counseling as a phrase has been really popular the last year, 18 months or so, so that more and more people are picking up on the phrase biblical counseling, and in most cases it doesn't mean anything about the Bible.

Nothing. But because it had gained some traction and momentum, people kind of grabbed onto it like a fad. And we found this out, what, about a year ago.

Maybe it was longer than that. I just noticed you're all by yourself.

[26:36] I just noticed you're all by yourself.

It's not because you're anti-social. You're a very loving person. Oh, right. I know the editor.

She has the power. Yes, that's absolutely true though. That is what happened. I forgot about that one. It was one of many modalities that she offered.

I remember I was in a conversation with a mission organization years ago, and they were talking to me about possibly doing some counseling with their missionaries around.

They have them all over the world. And I was excited about that. I thought, oh, I would love to reach out to these people and love on them in the Lord and help their marriages. Missionaries can be really stressed out, and the failure rate is huge.

[27 : 49] So I thought, wow, that's great. Well, we got to talking, I'll make a long story short, we got to talking about methodology and what I do, and as the interview progressed over the phone, we came to a question, and the guy said, after he heard me answer many things, he just asked and I answered.

I didn't know where it was going, and I thought they were more like-minded. And he said, well, Jeff, let me ask you this then, based on what you've told me, if one of our missionaries were to ask you if you would refer them to Christian counseling, because I had made a distinction between Christian counseling and biblical counseling, and psychology, those three.

He said, if someone were to ask you to refer them to a Christian counselor, you would do it, right? And I said, no, sir, absolutely not. And then I went, sir, why would I do that after what I just told you?

Why would I send somebody to be poisoned knowingly? I don't believe in integrationism. Christian counseling mixes worldly wisdom with the Bible.

At best, it will throw some Bible verses in behind humanistic psychology. Sir, in that definition, why would I ever send your people to someone like that?

[29 : 05] No, sir, I would not do that. Do you know he ended the conversation and that was the end of that? And I've never heard back. Yep. And they're a huge mission organization.

And I was hoping to be able to go do stuff with them, teach them, and that shut that down. this is the way that people think about Christian growth.

When we get in trouble, we get stuck, so we refer them out of the church to a counselor. And maybe the title Christian is with them, but you find that they do very little with the Scripture, if any.

It's a part of what they might do. And that's not the way we walk to the Lord, folks. That's not the way the people of God function. Alright, so we see that we are mirroring the Lord Jesus as we grow in character with Him because the Word is teaching us who Jesus is.

And I say it this way, the more we look in the mirror of the glory of Jesus reflected in the Bible, the more His image is then reflected in us in increasing degrees.

[30 : 23] That's the point I'm making. Now, Paul says this spiritual transformation into Christ likeness is from the Lord, from the Holy Spirit. Do you see that?

Now, this is the point Carolyn was making just a moment ago. This is from the Lord, from the Spirit. So, what part, you know, just think about it, don't answer it, what part do you play in your growth?

If you know that ultimately only the Holy Spirit can make you more like Jesus, then what is your part? Now, we've gone over this before, but it's a little tricky in the way of a question and working it out.

Right? So, we want to talk about that. Okay? There's another way Paul talks about becoming like Jesus, about our spiritual growth in Christ, and it's this.

We are becoming like Jesus as we learn and live to please Him. as we learn and live to please Him. Now, this is an important truth for Paul's theology of walking with the Lord in obedient faith.

[31 : 28] That we are walking in a manner worthy of the Lord. What that means is we are walking in a manner to please Him. And you can see in that self-denial, can't you?

That it's not always about feeling good, it's not always about being happy, it's not always about getting what I want or going in the direction I think I should go in. Or doing what I want to do.

The question in my mind is none of that. The question is, does it please the Lord? Now, how do we know what pleases Jesus? There it is.

She held up her Bible. Scripture, that's right. Is there any other way to know? To be definitive? No. Scripture tells us how to walk worthy of the Lord.

So, if you want to ask yourself, and I'm going to do this with you now, if you want to ask yourself, ladies who are married, is Jesus pleased with the way that I'm wifing?

[32:30] Now, look, Jesus is pleased with you in himself, right? He loves you, wives. So, you're not on a grading scale of whether or not he, I only love you a little bit today because you weren't wifing very good.

See how ridiculous? That's why we laugh because that just sounds so ridiculous. What I'm talking about is, do you know what pleases Jesus as a wife? Do you know?

And are you striving in it? Are you striving in it? That's your part. The Holy Spirit will make change in you, but what I'm asking you is, do you even know what pleases Jesus as a wife?

Not as a mother, that's not what I'm asking right now. As a wife. Husbands, do you know what pleases Jesus as a husband? Do you guys know what pleases Jesus as church people?

As brothers and sisters in Christ? In our men's group, when we meet together, we're very fond of referring to each other as churchmen because we're trying to emphasize the responsibility that we carry as spiritual leaders.

[33:40] Models. Our men should be able to come in here and model for our women what it means to walk with Jesus, be among brothers and sisters, and then take that out of here and keep modeling it as they go through their life, their family life.

Now, no man in here does that perfectly, but that's what we're striving for. This is what it means to please the Lord. He's not talking about pleasing God in the foundation part.

God is pleased with us in Christ, in His Son. He can't get any more pleased with us than that. Right? That's the ultimate pleasure is that God sees us in His Son.

What God would be displeased with is our behavior, how we live, how we follow. Are we following faithfully?

Alright? That's what we're talking about here. I'm not trying to win God over. That's been done for me in Jesus. I'm trying to be faithful in my followership.

[34:46] I'm not trying to win God's favor. Jesus did that for me. Okay? Do I live to please Jesus in all that I think, say, and do?

And what does living to please Jesus look like in my life? If we fixed a camera to you and observed an average week, seven days in your life, seven days, seven nights, what would most characterize your day-to-day living?

What would be the clear evidence in that living that you were making attempts to please Jesus in your attitudes and actions? You say, Jeff, what would most characterize me is me working eight to ten hours a day, five or six of those seven days.

And that's what you'd see. And I'd say, okay, does the camera reveal in that time that you are making attempts to please Jesus in the way that you're going about doing your job?

It's yes or no. You might say, well, sometimes it's yes or no. Do you see what I'm getting at here? Now here, this is not to guilt you any more than I want to be guilted.

[35:57] Here's what this is for. It's to sober us. It's to ask us how intentionally minded are we in thinking about pleasing Jesus and all that I think, say, and do.

How front-lobed Jesus are you? Are you front-lobed loaded Jesus? So that you're thinking about, if I say that, that is not going to please the Lord.

Check. Check. Check my mouth. And then check your attitude. Because your mouth speaks from the overflow of your heart. Right.

This is what I'm getting at with you tonight. Not to guilt you. We're all struggling with this at one level or another. But there's hope for us in thinking that this is what God wants us to do.

He wants us to live like this. The answers that you would come up with based on that camera being on you for those seven days and seven nights.

[37 : 06] The answers reveal your lifestyle. Your lifestyle. Not what you say you're about, but what you're really about because of how you live.

That's what shows. The Lord said He's going to reward good works. And those things that are not good works are going to burn in a Christian's life.

So He's watching. He's looking at the life we live. Your lifestyle reveals the loyalties of your heart. How you live reveals what you're most devoted to and what you trust in, what you live for.

It could be a person, it could be a hobby, it could be something in the moment that your heart's more loyal to than Jesus and if you don't check that it's going to lead to sand.

Now look at this question. Would all that you thought, said, and did be pleasing to Jesus in that scenario that I just set up for you?

[38 : 12] In terms of your life. Would it reflect your heart being always, notice these words, always submitted to pleasing Jesus in all things? Now if we're honest, what's the answer?

No. Okay, brothers and sisters, this is the boat we all find ourselves in. And so we need to come alongside of each other and bear one another's burdens and love each other well.

We need to be about encouraging each other in the Lord. Now I don't know about you, but I beat myself up enough. I don't need anybody else to do it.

I don't. I hate my sin. Now listen to this, I'm going to shock you. And I love my sin.

Or I wouldn't do it. It's shocking to hear from your pastor, isn't it? I imagine it's pretty similar to you.

[39 : 19] Or you wouldn't do it, and I wouldn't do it. We're not in heaven yet, are we? And so that's what that does for me, Dora.

It makes me long for heaven. It makes me long to be shed of this body and be with the Lord. But folks, until that happens, I have a responsibility and a stewardship before God to be faithful.

To show Jesus and to please Him in all that I think, say, and do, or I'm not serious about heaven. Did you hear that? Or I'm not serious about heaven.

Heaven might be a concept to me. A distant potentiality. That's not how the Bible presents it.

If you're in Christ, you're already there. That's how sealed it is in the heart and mind of the Lord. sin. The problem with this sin is this.

[40 : 22] The presence of remaining sin in our hearts is why we have to say no. We need to have the Bible teach us what is involved in walking to please Jesus because that's going to right the ship each time.

That wasn't pleasing to the Lord. Lord, please forgive me. Now let me replace it with what I know. the Scripture tells me does please the Lord. It doesn't please you when I speak like that.

So how do you tell me to speak? I replace it with that. So I repent and replace. Repent and replace. And I learned to live my life that way.

I'll never arrive while I'm on this earth. It just isn't going to happen. I speak about deceitful desires here. Is that there? Yeah. You see that in that?

area there? We want to deal with deceitful desires and it brings us back to the personal investment we need to make in our own spiritual growth.

[41 : 29] With me? Question? Good. Alright, I do want to have you turn to this passage, even though I'm going to have some of it on the screen.

It's 2 Corinthians 5. I've been putting the scriptures up here for you, but I want you to turn to these.

2 Corinthians chapter 5 verse 6. Therefore, being always of good courage and knowing that while we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord.

That's the reality. As long as my spirit, my soul, is living here in this body, this temple, this house, then I'm absent from being with the Lord in eternal glory.

verse 7. For we walk by faith, not by sight. We are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body, to be at home with the Lord.

[42 : 34] Paul said, you know what? Anybody who takes heaven seriously would rather be there than here. But, verse 9, therefore, we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him.

And this is Paul just accepting the fact, as long as I'm alive here, that's God's will for me. And so, while I'm here, I'm going to make the most of it, and I'm going to seek to be pleasing to Him.

So, whether at home, in this body, or absent from this body and with the Lord, the object doesn't change. I want to be pleasing to Him. Right?

Folks, that's more than a lifestyle. That is a life defining commitment. That is what defines you.

To be pleasing to the Lord. This is the Christian life. This is what we're called to in Christ. Now, I want you to notice in this verse, he says, we also have as our ambition.

[43 : 50] That's a turning, a hinge moment in this verse. Therefore, being always of good courage, we're taking courage in the Lord because we trust Him no matter what's going on in our life, knowing that while we are at home in this body, we are yet absent from the Lord, we also have as our ambition.

And then he's going to give us the second part, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him. I want to do a little bit with this ambition. Look, pleasing Jesus involves personal ambition.

Now, I don't know the last time you heard preaching or teaching on this, but there it is right there in the verse. We bring this to the table of our Christ-likeness, personal ambition.

So, what I'm talking about here up on the screen is a heaven-born ambition and not the kind of self-seeking, prideful ambition of the world.

I'm going to be the best at this no matter what and that kind of thing. Well, no matter what, is that what the Lord wants for you? That may not be the case.

[45 : 05] You know, a lot of people pursue a lot of different things and I love watching athletes who are really good at what they do, but then you find out about their life and how they go about living every day and the price that they pay and that their families pay for them to be at that level.

It's unbelievable that human beings could live like that. But they're willing to pay it so that they can be thought of as that. And then all my admiration starts to you know and think oh man one day you'll look back and go wow heaven born ambition not self seeking.

All right? Now look at this with me. Let me develop this with you real quickly here. The word that's used here is a compound word ambition. Combining the Greek word *phyllos* meaning love and *timē* meaning honor.

Love and honor. So godly ambition is loving what is honorable. Loving what is honorable. That's your ambition.

Your ambition is driven by a love for what God himself honors. So that's what you ask. Does this honor the Lord?

[46:34] Now look that's just not hard is it Lucy? It's not hard. That's an easy question isn't it? Does this honor the Lord? Lucy could do that. Matt could do that. Geneva could do that.

Does this honor Jesus? Does this please Jesus? That's a good question isn't it? That's the one I want to ask for my life. In this moment. Am I loving what God honors?

Hmm. Is that practical? That could be helpful. Am I loving my wife in this moment in a God honoring way?

Am I loving my husband in this moment in a God honoring way? Am I being a friend in this moment in a God honoring way? Out of love for the Lord?

The love of the Lord leads you in a God honoring life. Now when that becomes your greatest motivation for why you do what you do, think what you think and say what you say, your spiritual growth is going to rock it.

[47:43] Do you see why that would be the case? When you're making it about Jesus, you're going to find yourself overcoming things that had kept you down.

You're going to find yourself maturing in your ability to discern different situations in your life. Because you have now this ambition, this personal ambition to love what is honorable to God and to follow through.

So the question now is how much of your life is based on what is honorable to God? And how do we put that love for what God honors into a God-honoring pursuit for our life?

It's one thing to try and teach people concepts. Just about anybody can learn a concept or grasp it or resonate with it to some degree.

But when you try to take that concept and trade it over into life, movement, it becomes more difficult. Matt, you know this.

[48:52] He's a teacher. How long have you been teaching these guys? A while. Years. And we've had conversations about it. It's tough.

It's tough. Do you find that it's difficult when they try to take what you've given them in the way of the instruction and put them in a seat behind a helicopter or whatever and now they have to do it?

They have to make it all happen and not kill you. Thought into action is tough. And we find that across the spectrum. I don't even want to think about your job.

I can't. He's a technician as it were in his field. He takes this stuff and see I can't even talk about it because I don't get it.

It's amazing. It's hard. It's hard to take concepts and put them over into life. So when we talk about loving was honorable to the Lord, how do we turn that into a pursuit?

[50:01] A lifestyle that looks like Jesus? And here's the answer. We commit ourselves to the godly ambition of learning what is pleasing to Jesus.

That's it. You pour your ambition into a focused pursuit of what pleases Jesus Christ.

And the only way for you to answer that and make it happen is to dig into God's word and dig it out and then commit to it. That's it. Now that does not sound like rocket science does it?

But you can't do it without the spirit of God. And so don't quench the spirit. Don't grieve the spirit. Don't say one thing and do another.

Don't be a double minded person a hypocrite. Commit. Commit. And then encourage one another in the commitment.

[51 : 01] Alright? It's right for us to strive after or to be ambitious toward living a Jesus pleasing life.

We should make what is honorable to God our goal for Christian living and for growth in the Lord. Paul's highest goal is learning to live a Jesus pleasing life.

And there are other passages that instruct our hearts in this pursuit as our highest goal in life. And the first passage sets us in contrast with what we were before God transferred us from Satan's domain of darkness to God's kingdom of light in the Lord Jesus.

I want you to see it up here on the screen. you were formerly darkness but now you are light. You are light in the Lord.

Now why am I taking you here? This is Ephesians 5. Listen to this. The difference in our spiritual condition is explained in the phrase in the Lord.

[52 : 12] In the Lord. The light of Jesus shines in our hearts and it gives us his life. His life. Now the argument that Paul's making is this.

Since you are light in the Lord, notice the screen now, walk as children of light. How? Trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord.

There it is. That's the definition. That's the answer. You were this, but now you're this. So walk as this new person living in the light.

How? By trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. That's how. And the only way you can do that, and I can do that, is by knowing God's Word.

Taking that Word into our heart and committing yourself to live what you're reading. What you see pleases the Lord, and then you pray, Lord, I see this is pleasing to you.

[53 : 12] This is your will. When I'm walking like this, when this is a priority to me, and I'm actually putting this into practice in my relationships, it pleases you.

God, please help me to do this. Please help me to first be mindful of it, and then help me to think of ways that I can actually work it out in the way that I talk to people, relate to people.

See? You put it on a three-by-five card, whatever that pleasing attitude is, that pleasing behavior is, whatever, and you have it with you, and you rehearse it.

You with me in that? You're trying to take it in so that it can then be worked out. It's the only way it's going to happen.

You cannot work out what you have not worked in. So this is why it's so important that we understand this. walk as children of light, trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord.

[54 : 12] Now, you don't have to overthink this. Just follow Jesus' example in it. If you go to John chapter 8, the book of John, the gospel of John, chapter 8, again, I'm saying don't overthink it, just follow Jesus.

Follow His example. And I'm going to read from verse, do I want to jump in here? So Jesus is teaching them about His Father.

And they're having a hard time following Him about this. And so He comes to John 8, 28, and He says this, so Jesus said, when you lift up the Son of man, then you will know that I am He.

And I do nothing on my own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught me. And He who sent me is with me, He has not left me alone, for I always do the things that are what to God?

Pleasing. That's Jesus. How much more for us, folks? this is a tough teaching if you look at the context of what He just said.

[55 : 45] If you go back to verse 21, then Jesus said again to them, I go away and you will seek Me and will die in your sin where I am going you cannot come.

Can you imagine hearing that from Jesus? So the Jews were saying, surely He will not kill Himself, will He, since He says where I'm going you cannot come. And He was saying to them, you are from below, I am from above.

You are of this world, I am not of this world. Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins, for unless you believe that I am He, the Messiah, you will die in your sins.

So they were saying to Him, who are you? And Jesus said to them, what have I been saying to you from the beginning? I have many things to speak and to judge concerning you, but He who sent me is true, and the things which I heard from Him, these things I speak to the world.

They did not realize that He had been speaking to them about the Father. Jesus is teaching them about God. And they cannot follow, they can't grasp it.

[56 : 54] And so that's why He comes to say, what He says, when you lift me up, when you crucify me, then you will know that I'm He, the Messiah. I do nothing on my own initiative.

This is why I'm going to die. But I speak these things as the Father taught me, and He who sent me is with me. He's not left me alone. I always do the things that are pleasing to Him.

And as He spoke these things, many came to believe in Him. Amazing. What does it look like for you to live to please Jesus? It looks like you following Jesus and making your life about Him.

That's the general way of answering that. So like the Lord, you can say, look, God is with me. He hasn't left me alone.

Now this is you saying this. God is with me. He hasn't left me alone. I'm living to do the things that are pleasing to Him.

[57 : 59] This is a life lived by faith and your faith needs to grow. In 2 Corinthians 5, 7, you can go there with me. You probably already know this verse.

I read it to you just a little bit earlier. It's very simple. We walk by faith and not by sight.

We walk by faith and not by sight. One of the first things that we encounter in this theme of walking with the Lord is that we walk by faith and not by sight.

That's a way we please the Lord. We walk by faith. That's pleasing to God. We look at everything in life through the lens of faith in Jesus. What does my faith in Jesus have to do with this moment?

You ever ask yourself that? What does my faith in the Lord have to do with this moment? Boy, how clarifying that would be for you if you're facing a tough situation.

[59 : 00] What does my faith in the Lord Jesus have to do with this moment? How is it related? Where is Jesus in this?

For me? That's what we're asking. We live day to day by faith in the truth and person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now in the context of this particular verse, Paul's talking about his longing to have his glorified body instead of his earthly one because his glorified body is always going to be perfectly conformed and expressive of Jesus or his new nature in Christ.

That's what Paul wanted. That's what he longed for to be as much like Jesus in the way he lived as he could possibly be. And so he knew, boy, the highest way for me to be like Jesus is to be with him.

But I'm not with him yet. And so what does that mean for me? Well, it means that I'm going to go on encouraging you. Isn't that what he said? I'm going to go on building you up in your faith because that's my life.

That's how he felt about it anyway. In his earthly body he was prone to sin and that was really hard for the Apostle Paul. Is it hard for you sometimes to think about Paul sinning?

[60:18] Have you ever done that? Have you ever exercised that in your life where you study and you think about Paul sinned? He sinned after being a Christian I'm talking about.

He sinned. Paul, how did you sin? I remember the first time I ever heard, I can't tell you what it was, I wish I could, Dr.

MacArthur confessed something that he had struggled with the week before and I about fell out of my seat. And it shouldn't be that way.

Right? Yeah. We all struggle with this. In his new self, his new life and new walk, it was all by faith for Paul.

All by faith. We're saved by faith, live by faith, persevere by faith so that our faith in Christ is the most fundamental aspect separating us from darkness, death, fear, anxiety, worry, especially unbelief.

[61:30] Faith. Saving faith. Paul would commend the Colossians that he rejoiced to see their, he said, good discipline and the stability of their faith in Christ.

Wow. He said, you know what? You guys are spiritually disciplined and you have a stable, steady faith. And that just brought so much joy to him as a pastor.

It wasn't that they were perfect, but he saw a stability as they moved through the issues of life. They weren't getting blown all over the place spiritually.

They weren't on that roller coaster. And that brought joy to his heart. Then he told the Colossians to bring this spiritual discipline and stable faith to their daily walk with Jesus.

Here's how he said it. Therefore, as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him. Having been firmly rooted, now being built up in him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed and overflowing with gratitude.

[62:37] Colossians 2, 6, and 7. Our trust in Jesus needs to grow. And that happens as God takes us through the issues of life and shows himself faithful.

Then our trust grows. So the spiritual exercise of our faith happens during everyday life as we face challenges, trials, heartaches, unknowns, doubts, and other matters of life.

And then in whatever you are facing, you have one primary life-defining goal in your desire to be more like Jesus, and that's trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. The circumstance is just an opportunity, folks.

The circumstance is not God. The circumstance does not have to be self-defining. The circumstance is God's opportunity for you to trust Him and obey Him by grace through faith in Christ as He conforms you to His Son.

Alright, in the remaining time, questions, comments, insights, a place you want to take us in this as you've been thinking? Give me some feedback.

[63:48] What are you thinking? Does it sound too ABC? Michelle? Michelle? I think about our ambition to live in ways to honor God, it starts with humility because humility, we become humble when we realize that we will never measure up the night that we will be able to get ourselves Okay.

Okay. Good. Good, Michelle. See, you're back there and the wheels are turning, man. Thank you for sharing that with us.

Okay. Okay.

Truth began to show you the reality of who you were. And that was very humbling. And then to know the gospel, to know that Jesus gave himself for you at your worst.

That's humbling. And that he goes on loving you and is patient with you, even though you constantly trip up. That's humbling. And then you become, you said, grateful.

[65 : 41] It increases your gratitude for who the Lord is and how he treats you. That he's so faithful and kind and gentle. And that he's willing to discipline you because he loves you.

A good father disciplines his son that he loves, right? And then from gratitude, you move to what? Good.

Good. That's a great way to think about it, Michelle. The way that it develops and works out in our life. Now, what will short circuit that is if you make your spiritual life about what you feel.

Because it's often in the spiritual life, it's a struggle and a fight. And you don't often feel the warm fuzzies, do you? If you wait for the warm fuzzy.

So again, just giving you insight into this stuff. So Greg and I, we don't aim at warm fuzzies. I'm not crafting my sermons to try and say things so that you get a warm fuzzy.

[66 : 49] Greg and I aren't structuring the ministries of our church to give people warm fuzzies. We know that the feelings of your love for Christ will follow on the truth. As you bring that truth into your heart, it will warm your heart, guide your heart, make you discerning, and it will make you want to worship the Lord.

That's the key. We don't have to work it up. We just have to put it out there and let the Holy Spirit work it in. Our job is to preach and teach faithfully and trust the Spirit to do His work in your heart.

And then your heart will respond in worship. We just give you the opportunity. Right? Thank you, Michelle. Any other ideas, comments, insights, questions about what we're doing?

Some of the things that I kind of fight or work through is as I learn more, making sure that I check myself and what I'm learning, that it doesn't fuck me up or make me become prideful or, you know, because it gives me the feeling.

I feel like, yeah, and so therefore I use that as a tool or, you know, so yeah, just kind of working through things.

[68 : 15] Thank you, Mark. Thank you, Mark. Do you find that that sometimes happens without you even realizing it, or are you pretty aware of it? I'm trying to be fairly aware of it. Become more?

Yeah, more and more as I'm working through. Okay. I work to be more cognizant of not being nothing. Not the pride thing and all?

Yeah, puffed up. Okay, so Mark's referencing knowledge puffs up. And so staying humble about that knowledge. So the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus.

So we want to make sure we take that and aim it at pleasing the Lord. Lord, how can I use this knowledge to please you? Whatever it is. But especially spiritual knowledge.

Yeah, we don't want to create a church family constantly looking down our spiritual noses at people who come in here and don't have the same level of understanding of certain doctrines as we do, or they don't understand the way that we are trying to nurture an atmosphere of worship here that puts Christ central, and we really mean it.

[69 : 27] We don't just say it. We don't want to look down on those folks. We want them to stay long enough for us to help them transition and grow. And this is what Suzanne and I were offered when we went to an experience like this for the very first time out at Grace Community.

We were those people we didn't know. And we were very shallow in our faith, in our Christianity. And nobody made fun of us. You know, they didn't put us in the spiritual dunce room.

You know, and make us do remedial training. They just brought us in and loved us and invited us to different functions where we could sit under the Word and listen to people talk.

Boy, we got good at that, didn't we? We got really good at closing our mouths and listening. And then all the way home, we would both be like chatterbox. Did you hear this?

Well, then what did they say? Oh, really? What was that about? And we were just taking it in. We were being taught how to think in the Lord.

[70:30] We didn't know how to do that. Two seminary degrees. And I did not know how to do that. Knowledge. Brother, to your point.

Knowledge. But it wasn't knowledge that I was using to please the Lord. It wasn't. Well, thank you for being here tonight and being attentive.

So we have our men's conference coming up. Terry and his wife Rebecca, they should be coming in within another... Oh, thank you, honey.

To the hotel. Uh-huh. Yeah, they're coming in tonight. And we'll see them in the morning at some point. They're wanting to do Colonial Williamsburg tomorrow because I don't think they've ever been here, have they?

So we'll see about it. But please pray for the men. Please pray for the men. We anticipate having some men from outside of our church come.

[71:34] Thank you guys so much. Matt and Mark, you guys and your wives, thank you so much for running the lead on this and helping us out, involving other people.

Pray for Terry and Rebecca as they come forward to serve. And then there was one other thing. Greg, do we have anything else?

You can't think of anything either? There was something in my mind and I can't remember now. I'll think of it later. But I do want to acknowledge this.

So, Vanita, is there a birthday girl in our midst? There is. Did somebody bring something? Okay.

Geneva, did you bring a birthday cake? Wow. Well, I'll tell you what. Is it okay if we sing happy birthday to you now? Would that be okay?

[72:34] Happy birthday to you. Happy birthday to you. Happy birthday to the Jiva.

Happy birthday to you. And Geneva is seven years old.

That's amazing. How old was she when you guys first came? Harper was two months.

Harper was two months. Four years. Wow. Great goodness.

You're growing up so fast. All these beautiful girls. We got you back, brother. We got you back. All these beautiful young ladies growing up in our midst.

[73:40] All right. That's right. That's right, big brother. You got her back. I know. Well, let's pray and then we'll have some goodies and some cake and celebrate Geneva's birthday today.

All right. Let's pray together. Father, thank you for this time that we've had together as brothers and sisters in Christ. And thank you for Terry and Rebecca, dear friends, as they come in to serve and teach.

Thank you for my fellow pastor, Greg and Revy. Thank you for all the time that they spend serving this body. So much of it behind the scenes, Lord, but so vital to who we are, what we are these last 10 years.

We thank you for your grace and mercy as you teach us the Scriptures. And we want to walk to please Jesus. So, Lord, help us to do that by saying no to sin and saying yes to what it is that honors you most.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. God bless you guys. Let's get some cake. Amen.