

The Believer's Ambition

Scripture: Selected Scriptures

Code: 80-413

Now I'm a simple person. You may not understand that, but I am a very simple person. I'm always looking for the irreducible minimum. I'm always looking for the simplest way to understand anything and everything. I remember when I first began to discover how simple I was, it was in the context of somewhat more complexity. I was invited Wheaton College many, many years ago when I was a young preacher, and I was invited there with a group of very well established and well known and much older Christian leaders from around America, and we were invited in a room, and we were going to engage in a kind of Christian therapy experience, and we were each handed a small paper cup.

This was not my particular interest, but I figured I'd go along with the program. And the speaker who was into self analyzation, rather obsessed with the fact that we needed to analyze ourselves, said, "What I want you to do is take that cup and manipulate that cup so that it reflects how you view yourself." This paper cup. So I'm sitting next to a guy who I won't name, you might know him, and I never saw such an intense level of concentration. He looked like an expert at origami that could tweak and twist.

I thought he was just kind of a normal guy, but the longer I looked at him, the more bizarre I became convinced he really was. And we had 45 minutes, I think, to mess with the cup to develop the cup into some kind of a reflection of how we viewed ourselves. I sat there with this little cup in my hand, and eventually, I just punched the bottom out. Threw the bottom away, and looked through. Then I sat there for the rest of the time while everybody else was fixing their cup to be some kind of psychological reflection of how they viewed themselves.

Then they went around the room, and we had to explain all of this. This went on for several hours until they finally came to me, and I said, "Pretty simple. I simply see myself as a channel through which the truth of God can flow. That's the end of the story." So I was roundly criticized as being insensitive, as hiding secrets, of being unwilling to discover the deep things within me. I said, "I don't know. This is how I see it. That's it. I'm a simple guy. Life for me is not particularly complex."

Even when it comes to spiritual life, there's a certain simplicity about spiritual life that I think is not just a preference on my part, but I think it's an accurate way to understand it. And I want to talk about that simplicity with the context of a new year and how we might look at life in the year ahead of us. While life itself throws a lot of complex things at us, the approach to life that as believers we ought to

have is a rather simple one.

When I first came to Grace Church, people asked me what were my goals for the church. I said, “I don’t set goals. I don’t make goals. I don’t establish goals. I don’t set timetables. The truth of the matter is I don’t plan things beyond next Sunday.” I have to plan for next Sunday because you’ll all show up and I need to preach. People say, “Do you plan series in advance, sermons in advance?” No. I plan for the next Sunday or the next time I have to speak. I said early in my ministry here I’m far more concerned about the depth of my teaching than I am the breadth of its effect. That’s God’s work. My responsibility is to be found faithful as a steward of divine mysteries, like Paul. And Paul has always been my hero, and I think he had a very simple view of life.

He saw himself as a man who was not particularly to be given over to oratory or human wisdom, but to preach Christ and Him crucified. That was his message to the point that people mocked him for that simplicity. He viewed himself as a steward of divine truth that had been handed to him which he was to distribute to those the Lord gave him opportunity to reach. He was, if I can borrow from him, little more than a channel through which God would speak.

It was the depth of his commitment to that that he had to make. It was God’s responsibility to decide the breadth of it. I don’t set goals. I’ve never set goals. Obviously, you want to be more like Christ. You want to be more faithful, and all of those things. But it’s not about the quantity of ministry. It’s about the quality of life that you bring to ministry.

So I can honestly say to you I really have never been a person driven by ambition. And you might think that’s probably a good thing because ambition has a bad reputation. Thomas Brooks wrote – Thomas Brooks was a puritan. He wrote this. “Ambition is a gilded misery, a secret poison. Ambition is a hidden plague, the engineer of deceit, the mother of hypocrisy, the parent of envy, the original vice of the angels, and Adam and Eve. Ambition is the destroyer of virtue, the blinder of hearts. Ambition turns medicine into malady and remedy into disease. High seats are never but uneasy, and crowns are always stuffed with thorns.” So says Thomas Brooks.

We all know the stories of blind ambition. We all are exposed to highly ambitious self-promoting people. It has caused many people to sell their souls, compromise their convictions, violate their beliefs, and sacrifice their character, and essentially destroy relationships all around them. Ambition is often associated with adjectives, like unscrupulous, self-centered, proud, driven, insensitive, careless. Ambition often leaves a trail of carnage of family friends.

Ambition tramples over principle. The actual word in English, ambition, is from the Latin *ambire* which from which we get the word ambivalent. Means to go back and forth. *Ambire* means both. It refers to someone who goes both ways. To gain an end, this person will go any way he needs to go. This is ambition. He will face both ways at the same time. It was applied to the person who had no

convictions but would do anything to gain selfish goal. That's an ambitious person.

The word was used of Roman, you won't be surprised, politicians. Nothing new. Eager to gain power, eager to gain prestige, eager to gain money, and to gain that, they'd attempt to take both sides of an issue to gain the votes of all the people. In sum, the Latin word, sum, S-U-M, the Latin word meant campaigning for promotion at any cost. That's what *ambire* meant, campaigning for promotion at any cost. Ambitious people were associated with greed, with lust for power, with a strong desire for social visibility, for popularity, for approval, for peer recognition, for authority over others.

In fact, ambition had such a bad reputation, and justifiably so, that the missionary leader Bishop Stephen Neill once wrote, "I am inclined to think that ambition in an ordinary sense of the term is nearly always sinful in ordinary men. I'm certain that in the Christian, it is always sinful, and that it is most inexcusable in the ordained minister." So says Stephen Neill.

In fact, some have suggested – Oswald Sanders suggested this, that Jesus came into the world to save people from their selfish ambition. One writer says, "Because we children of Adam want to become great, he became small. Because we will not stoop, he humbled himself. Because we demand to rule, he came to serve." The Bible even condemns selfish ambition. Jeremiah 45:5 says, "But you, are you seeking great things for yourself? Do not seek them?" Pretty plain. Isn't it? Are you seeking great things for yourself? Do not seek them. So you can make a case for the Bible rejecting ambition.

Some have said, as we read, surely for any Christian and especially an ordained minister, ambition has no place at all. Now with that in mind, I want you to turn to 2 Corinthians 5 because in this chapter in a very brief statement in verse 9, Paul tells us he is ambitious. Second Corinthians 5:9. "Therefore, we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to him." Verse 10. "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body according to what he has done, whether good or bad."

So what did Jeremiah have in mind when he said, "Are you seeking great things for yourself? Do not seek them." What he had in mind was seeking great things for yourself. When Paul says he has ambition, his ambition is to be pleasing to the Lord. Big difference. The Bible forbids that we have ambition to please ourselves. The Bible elevates the noble desire to have ambition to please the Lord. The prophet Jeremiah then is not condemning all ambition as sinful, but he is condemning selfish ambition, personal ambition. In fact, the Greeks actually helped elevate the idea of ambition say from the Romans and the Latin language. The Greek word means to love honor. To love honor. That's the word here that has essentially translated ambition.

The Greek word is a more noble word. The Greek word speaks of the desire for a place of honor, the desire for a place of nobility. Ambition can be motivated then by loving what is honorable, what is

noble, what is elevated. It doesn't have to be pure ambivalence for the sake of selfish goals. It can be the love of honor, and that is reflected as that word progresses through history and winds up in the Greek language. Paul spoke of that noble honor, for example, when he wrote of those who seek spiritual leadership, those who seek to be elders or pastors.

He says in 1 Timothy, "If any man aspires to the office of an overseer, it is a noble, honorable work he desires to do." There's nothing wrong with aspiring to be a pastor, aspiring to be an elder. That is a noble aspiration. In fact, one translation translates 1 Timothy 3:1 with these words. "To aspire to leadership is an honorable ambition. To aspire to spiritual leadership is an honorable ambition." I'm glad that we've rescued the Latin concept and the Greek concept and elevated a place for legitimate ambition. It's a noble thing to want to be a leader in the church. When you understand what that leadership means, leadership is a stewardship for others for which you are accountable to God. And in the end, it is for his honor.

Paul had a noble ambition, and he was not alone. Notice back at verse 9, "We also have as our ambition," he uses plural pronouns here. He's speaking for himself and for those who are with him, and for those who are influenced by him. We have as our ambition – it's not wrong to have ambition. It's wrong to have selfish ambition. As Paul illustrates here, it's the right thing to have noble ambition.

An insight into that might come from Romans 15 and verse 20 where Paul says this. "And I aspired to preach the gospel, not where Christ was already named so that I would not build on another man's foundation, but as it is written, they who had no news of him shall see, and they who had not heard shall understand." It was a noble ambition to desire to be a pastor and an overseer. It is a noble ambition to be a missionary, to take the message of the gospel to people who had never heard. He preached for the love of what was noble. It's the same verb that is used in 2 Corinthians 5 used in Romans 15.

He had a legitimate ambition to please the Lord, a legitimate ambition to lead the church, a legitimate ambition to preach the gospel, and that is honorable. Now I want us to look at Paul's ambition from the context that we have before us and just share a few insights that might be encouraging to you as you think about setting a goal for your life and keeping it simple. He had ambition for let's call it the highest goal. The highest goal. Back to verse 9. "We also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to him."

Doesn't get more simple than that. Does it? That is not complicated. We have as our highest goal to be pleasing to him. That same verb, to be pleasing to him, is used in Titus 2:9, "Of slaves who please their masters." That's what it means, and it fits the picture of Christ as Lord and the believer as his slave. This is the imagery. It is slave language. It is slave talk, and it is used in that specific way, as I said, in Titus 2:9.

He sees himself as a slave whose one purpose, one aspiration, one ambition in life is to please, to satisfy his master by doing his master's will. I think for the believer, that is the simplicity of life. We are nothing but a channel through which the will of God, the word of God, the purpose of God, the work of God can flow. I think the very best commentary on this might be to go back to his earlier letter to the Corinthians. Look at 1 Corinthians 4:3. Paul has already said what I mentioned to you about viewing ministry as a stewardship. He is a slave, and he has been given responsibilities as steward slave, and he needs to discharge that stewardship in a trustworthy manner.

And he has only one person to please, only one person to please. And that is the one who gave him that stewardship. So this is what he says in verse 3. "To me, it is a very small thing that I may be examined by you or by any human court. In fact, I do not even examine myself. For I am conscious of nothing against myself, yet I am not by this acquitted, but the one who examines me is the Lord. Therefore, stop passing judgment before the time, but wait until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of men's hearts, and then shall each man's praise come to him from God."

The apostle is like a violinist who doesn't care about the applause of the audience. He cares only about the affirmation of the master who trained him, who taught him. Paul lived to please the Lord. It really didn't matter to him what people said. Through the years, I have been repeatedly asked, "Do you think about how people will react to what you say? Do you realize that you may offend people? Does it concern you what people might do in response to what you say?" Not at all. I find comfort here in the fact that Paul says, "It's a small thing that I may be examined by you or by any human court."

One of the severe problems in Corinth – you remember this if you studied the book – was that people were judging each other. That's basically chapters 1, 2, 3, and 4. There was this divisive spirit, people saying, "I'm of Paul. I'm of Paulis, I'm of Cephus, I'm of Christ," and sitting in judgment on each other, criticizing, condemning each other. Within this context, Paul declares that all human judgment of motives and hearts is wrong because God alone can judge.

It is of no consequence really what men say, what men think. The apostle is not concerned with earthly, biased, preliminary valuations by people as to his faithfulness, as to his value, positive or negative, whether they want to hail him or whether they want to condemn him. None of it matters. There's no human court that accurately evaluate him. Not even is he exposed to himself because we are all biased in our own favor. Right?

So emphatically, he says, "To me, to me, it is a very small thing. It is not important." Now he's not saying, "I don't really care what you think," in some kind of dismissive way. He's not saying it in a way that indicates indifference. This would be seriously wicked to dismiss people, to have no interest in

people, no concern for people. What he's saying here is that my accountability doesn't reside with you. You're not my judge. I have an accountability far above you. And the reason I don't care about your judgment is because I do care about God's judgment.

A far higher law, a far greater judge, a perfect knowledge that belongs to the divine one will render the absolute true assessment of my life. That's Paul. And he is strongly committed to that. He says things in verse 8, "He who plants and he who waters are one, but each will receive his own reward according to his own labor." We're God's fellow workers. You're God's field God is building. "According to the grace of God, which was given to me like a wise master builder, I laid a foundation, another builds on it, each man must be careful how he builds on it."

"No man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. We build a foundation, and then we use these features, gold, silver, precious stones, or wood, hay, stubble. Each man's work will become evident when for the day will show it because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. If each man's work remains, he receives a reward." Paul defers all the evaluations to the future. He hated to defend himself. He hated to speak in his own defense. That's what makes the second Corinthian letter such a very painful letter for him to write because for the sake of the gospel and the protection of the Corinthians, he has to declare himself the true spokesman of God as over against the false teachers.

But it is agonizingly painful for him to do that. He has no interest in being his own defender. He has no interest in bragging about himself. I suppose the epitome of that was when he went to heaven, and he came back and said, "I don't want to talk about it. I have nothing to say. It's not helpful. I saw things I'm not even allowed to speak of."

In 2 Corinthians 4, he describes himself as a clay pot in what is one of the more vivid descriptions in all of scripture, frankly. He says in 2 Corinthians 4:7, "We have this treasure, and that's the treasure of the gospel in clay pots. We have this treasure in clay pots." He is a clay pot. In 2 Timothy, Paul reminds us that food was served on gold and silver and fancy dishes, and the waste of the household was hauled away in clay pots. Paul is saying he's nothing more than a garbage bucket in which God has deposited the glory of the gospel, the truth shining in the face of Christ. Paul never settled for a verdict on his life from people. Favorable or unfavorable. It really didn't matter.

In Galatians 1, he demonstrates this. Verse 8. "Even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he's to be accursed. As we have said before, so I say again, if anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed." And then this line. "For am I now seeking the favor of men or of God, or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I wouldn't be a slave of Christ."

He had been accused of being a man pleaser, and so he takes on the Galatians in this letter, and he says, "Let me tell you, if there's any deviation in the gospel, you're cursed." Does that sound like a man pleaser? Does that sound like somebody is trying to build his reputation to become more popular? Paul reminds us all in 1 Corinthians 10 that the one who thinks he stands better take heed lest he falls. He knows that the one who examines him is the Lord and no other. The Lord is the one who renders the verdict on his life, the only verdict that matters.

So when the apostle Paul tells us that it doesn't matter to him what men say, that's what he's talking about. Go back to 1 Corinthians 4 for a moment. He says, "The one who examines me," verse 4, "is the Lord. Therefore, stop passing judgment before the time. God's time. God's time. In God's time, the praise will come. Each man will have praise from God." So what is Paul's ambition? To be pleasing to the Lord. Let me simplify your life. That's it right there. You said, "I'd like to have a New Year's resolution." Resolve to be pleasing to the Lord.

Resolve to do everything you do to please him. It's really that simple. If you're going to please him, you have to know what pleases him. Right? So it starts with scripture where he has revealed his will. From scripture to the truth the scripture affirms, from the truth the scripture affirms to the conviction, the belief in it, that becomes a part of our system of belief. From conviction to behavior, and from behavior to desire.

We start out with the truth of scripture because there, we find what pleases the Lord. We let the spirit of God develop those convictions of scripture in us until they begin to show up in our behavior, and increasingly, they become the passion and the driving desires of our hearts. That was Paul's ambition. And it really is that simple. This is not something to sort of resurrect every year. This is something to live every single moment of every single day, to be pleasing to him. Listen to what James says in James 4:13.

"Come now, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow, we will go to such and such a city and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit.' You don't know what your life will be like tomorrow. You're just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. Instead, you ought to say, 'If the Lord wills, we will live, and also do this or that.' But as it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. Boasting about your future, your plans, your dreams, your ambitions, what you're going to go to, what you're going to achieve, what you're going to accomplish. That's evil. The one who knows the right thing to do and doesn't do it, to him, it is sin. And what's the right thing to do? To yield to the will of God and do what is pleasing to him."

I don't know what the Lord has for my future, but I know what he has for my present. And that will establish my future, and my ambition in the present constantly is to be pleasing to him, to be pleasing to him. And I know what pleases him because I know what he has declared in scripture. That's why Paul prays those wonderful prayers that we would be filled with all the knowledge of God, with all the

wisdom of God so we know what pleases him. Again, this takes us back to scripture, back to theology. You can't please him if you don't know what pleases him, so we start where we have to start with the truth of scripture.

You could never teach the scripture too much. You could never teach the scripture too extensively. You could never teach the scripture too deeply. You could never overdo the exposure to the word of God because therein lies the information of what pleases him. That drives the ambition of our lives. Very frustrating for people who aren't in churches where they're taught that, struggling to live a life without really understanding clearly what pleases the Lord.

So Paul had one ambition in life, and that's really enough, and it was the highest goal possible to please the Lord. So that's the highest goal. Let's take a second look at this short text and look at the widest expression. The highest goal and the widest expression. The apostle recognizes that this is an ambition that has no limits, that knows no bounds, because he says, "This is our ambition whether at home or absent." He's not talking about whether I'm at the house or at work. No. This is something very much beyond that.

In fact, to know, go back to verse 1. If the earthly tent, which is our house, is torn down, if we die, we have a building from God. Another body in the next life, a house not made with hands eternal in the heavens. He's talking about going to heaven, receiving a glorified body. In this house, we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven, and as much as we having put it on will not be found naked, for indeed, while we are in this tent, we groan being burdened because we don't want to be unclothed, but to be clothed so that what is mortal will be swallowed up by life.

All of that is simply saying we long for the heavenly life, the heavenly body, heavenly glory. He who has prepared us for this very purpose is God who gave to us the spirit as a pledge. Therefore, being always of good courage, knowing that while we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord, so there's the key. When he's talking about being at home, he means being here, being in this life, being therefore absent from the body. We would prefer to be at home with the Lord. That sets the stage for verse 9, whether at home meaning in this life, or absent from this life in the presence of the Lord, our ambition never, ever changes.

Paul had a strong desire to leave the world. Any believers should. He was faithful to the calling of God. He was diligent. He was sacrificial. He was relentless. He was driven by all the right motives. To live was Christ, to die was gain. It was wonderful to be here. It was far better to depart and be with Christ. It meant for him a new resurrection body. It meant as it does for all believers sinless perfection, the fulfillment of redemptive purpose, holy immortality, the fullness of eternal life, all the glories of heaven, and mostly being home with the Lord.

So he preferred to leave, but he didn't sit on the roof in his pajamas doing nothing and waiting for some rapture to happen. He says, "Whether we're at home here and absent from there or at home there, the ambition never ever changes. I love that. That is the universal desire of the believer on earth and in heaven to be pleasing to the Lord. It is the highest goal. It's the only goal, and it has the widest expression both in time and eternity."

He's quick to respond to anyone who might think that such language sort of delivers us from the sinful world and from things that are transient, temporary, weak, limited, embattled. Life in this earthly body, we should just hang on until the next life comes. That's not what Paul was saying. In fact, in 1 Corinthians 9, he's so committed to pleasing the Lord that he says, "I beat my body to bring it into submission. I fight not as one who beats the air." He preaches passionately, faithfully. Whether he's free or whether he's in prison. His immediate desire is exactly what his desire will be in heaven, and that is to please the Lord, whether he's here or whether he's there.

That will not change. If I'm at home in the body or absent from the body in the presence of the Lord, my passion is the same passion. It's a heavenly passion. In Romans 14, he said that we don't live for ourselves, but we live for the Lord. Romans 14:7 and 8. His desire was to pursue Christ, Philippians 3. He says that. To press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. He wanted to be like Christ. He wanted to be with Christ. In the words of John, he wanted to see him as he is.

So nothing really changes to the true believers. That's the work of the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit. We're given a desire that will last forever, to be pleasing to the Lord. That's the highest goal and the widest experience. One other thought, and I'll close before I lose my voice totally. He's prompted by the deepest motive. What's driving this ambition in him? It is the reality that he expresses in verse 10.

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body according to what he has done whether good or useless, *phaulos*, rather than bad, evil." This is the deepest motive. Four is key. It means because his ambition is driven caused by the fact that he faces a monumental accounting, a monumental event. When he instructed Timothy about preaching the word, he laid a burden on Timothy that is as heavy as he gets.

"I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing in his kingdom preach the word." Preach the word because you're going to be accountable for it before God and before Christ. We must all appear. Strong terms. All of us must be there. This is the inevitability of the event. There is an event coming, folks. We don't just slide into heaven and blend in.

There is an event. It's an event at which we must appear. It's an appointment. We have to show up. It's a summons to court, if you will. We must make an appearance, find a row. We must be made manifest. It means to make manifest, to make clear, to disclose, to reveal. Where are we going to stand? We're going to stand before the judgment seat of Christ. The judgment seat of Christ. That's only for believers, by the way. The unbelievers go before the great white throne judgment of God where they're consigned to hell. Believers go before the *bma*, the judgment seat of Christ.

Hebrews 4:13 says, "There's no creature hidden from his site, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of him with whom we have to do." This takes us back to what we saw in 1 Corinthians. God who examines the heart knows our motives, and at that event, when we come before the judgment seat of Christ, God will render the final verdict on whether we lived our lives motivated to please him. Stripped of all pretense, stripped of all disguise, all the external trappings of religion and morality dissolve in that confrontation, and we're bare naked there, and what is revealed is whether or not the works that we did were gold, silver, precious stones, or wood hay stubble.

And it's not so much the doing as what motivated the doing. *Bma*, the term for judgment seat, is a familiar term to the Corinthians because there was a main street in Corinth – if you go there, I'm sure it's still there. You can see this platform that was there in ancient times, and the ruins of it are still there as far as I know. The word means a place reached by steps, an elevated place. It's not so much a judgment place as an elevated place. It was a place where athletes went when they won victories. It was a place where people went when they were honored.

The New Testament does use the word to refer to pilots' judgment seats where it has a definite reference to judging. In Corinth, it was the seat for judging, but it's not like a place of sentencing criminals. It's a place to render a judgment. In Acts 18, Paul was brought there in Corinth before Gallio, and his case was dismissed. It is a raised platform where the judge towered over everyone else, and the deeds of the person were then presented, either for indictment or for exoneration, for reward, or for condemnation.

Paul is saying, "We're all going to stand there. Each one of us is going to appear. But I want to encourage you because the results are all good. Each one may be rewarded for his deeds in the body according to what he has done, whether good or useless." The useless is the wood, hay, and stubble. It's gone. You will not be judged for your sins why? Christ was judged for your sins. You will be rewarded for having served him with a pure motive of doing everything to please him.

In Romans 14:10, Paul says, "We will all stand before the judgment seat of God, and each one will give an account of himself to God." There will be an accounting. It's not about sin. It's about determining your eternal reward so that you may be rewarded. The things that were useless disappear. They're gone. And the things that were genuinely motivated by a desire to please the Lord remain. And on the basis of those, we receive a heavenly reward. Gold, silver, precious stones, wood

hay stubble. It's the long-range view. Isn't it? I think most people are all caught up in what they can get here and now.

As believers, we want to make sure that we push everything into that future. Paul says, "My ambition is simple. Whatever pleases the Lord. To be pleasing to him. Here and in heaven, it's the same ambition. What drives me, some day, I will have to give an account, and I will forever receive the benefit of that service rendered to him motivate by a desire to please him, not a desire to elevate myself."

The highest goal, be pleasing to Christ. The widest expression of that in this life and the life to come. The deepest motive, the anticipation of eternal rewards. So as you think about your life, think about it in those simple terms. That's all God ever asks out of you. That's the ambition that drove, really, the most powerful Christian in all the New Testament. That's all that's required to ready you for standing before Christ. Let's pray. Father, we thank you for the clarity again that comes to us through scripture.

We've covered a lot of things tonight, and yet we've covered one thing. May we walk away at getting at having that locked into our memory, that life for us is about pleasing you all the time in every way from the heart, for the final decision will not be so much on what we did as why we did it. To please you, to honor you, for that day when we can stand before you and validate the claim to love you with the fullest evidence of faithful service. Even as we look into a new year, think about all that is ahead and have no idea what's coming, we know it's all in your hands. We can't predict the future. We can't know what's going to happen. We don't want to know, but you know, and you've ordained it all.

And come what may, may we never be so distracted by the world around us, may we never be so disquieted and discomforted by the things that are going on that distress and disturb us that we lose sight of the simplicity of the Christian life, which is to have one sole driving ambition: To be pleasing to you. That means to live in conformity with all that pleases you from the heart, knowing that one day, you will pour out eternal blessings on that level of faithfulness. So we commit ourselves to you with eagerness to see what will unfold in the days ahead. We thank you, in Christ's name, amen.

Available online at: <http://www.gty.org>

COPYRIGHT (C) 2015 Grace to You

You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (<http://www.gty.org/connect/copyright>).