Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Back to the Basics, Part 5
Scripture: Selected Scriptures
Code: 90-5

Tonight I want to wrap up a little look at the basics. In the early years, informative years of our church, we covered a lot of basic ground. It was a real joy, by the way, tonight to see Lynn Corey here. Dear brother in Christ and so much a part of the ministry of Grace for so many years. And I said to him, he said, "What are you preaching on tonight?" And I said, "Well, it will be old stuff to you because you were here when it was all being set down as foundational."

But back in the early years of the growth and development of our church, there were some basic things that the Lord gave us--and I'm sure He gave them to us--that formed and shaped and gave direction to the life of our ministry. Because we have had so many new people, as witnessed by the fact that most of you here tonight, were probably not here in those early years. It was requested that I might go back over some of those very basic things and that's what we've been doing for the last few weeks. By the way, that will end tonight. And next Sunday night, we'll return to our study of Romans. We'll take up the great fourteenth chapter of Romans, which deals with not causing your brother to stumble and how to take care of a weaker brother. Marvelous truth.

Now in looking at this matter of the basics of the Christian life we've come, through some rather circuitous manner, to come to a list of things by which we glorify God. And we talked about the fact that if our life it to be to the glory of God, if that's the purpose for which we live, to offer Him praise, then we need to be able to understand that. We need to be able to apply that. And there are some very practical ways in which we can do that.

First of all, we said that we glorify God by confessing Jesus as Lord ... by confessing Jesus as Lord. It says in Philippians 2:11 that when we confess Jesus as Lord, we do so to the glory of God, the Father. God is glorified when we acknowledge the Lordship of Jesus Christ. When we affirm that He is not only sovereign in the universe, and not only sovereign in our lives in the broad sense, but that He is the One who we desire to obey as Lord and Savior.

Secondly, we said to glorify God means to aim our life at that purpose. In other words, the goal of life becomes glorifying God. The goal of life becomes focusing on God's glory. 1 Corinthians 10:31, whatever you do, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do it all to the glory of God. That's a very basic and a very essential part of our life.

Thirdly, we saw that we glorify God by confessing our sin, another one of the basics of Christian living. And we noted in Joshua 7 and verse 19, the Bible says, as Achan was approached regarding his sin, "Confess your sin and give glory to God." God is glorified when we acknowledge our sin. When we repent of our sin. When we turn from our sin. And when we admit that our sin is our sin so that the God who chastens us is not seen to be unjust.

Fourthly, we said that we glorify God by trusting Him. By a life of practical faith, which says I really believe God. It's not just a creed. It's not just something I say. It's a way I live. I live my life demonstrating my trust in God. In Romans chapter 4 we read about Abraham. And it says Abraham was strong in faith, giving glory to God. God is really honored and glorified when you believe in Him. And I don't mean that in a saving aspect, as much as I mean it in the day-to-day trust factor. In other words, when we and I demonstrate by the way we live and the way we handle problems and troubles and trials, that we believe God is in it and has a purpose and will see His way through that, we demonstrate that which glorifies God. He wants to be seen as a God who is worthy of trust.

And then fifthly, we glorify God by fruitfulness. In John 15:8 the Bible says that when we bear much fruit, we do so to the glory of God, the Father. "Herein is your Father glorified, that you bear much fruit." When we have righteous fruit in our life.

And last time, we looked particularly at the idea of glorifying God through praise or worship. Psalm 50 verse 23, "Whoso offereth praise, glorifieth Me." And we talked about reciting God's attributes and reciting His works and being thankful to Him.

And then we completed, at least up to this point, our look at these ways to glorify God by discussing prayer. We glorify God through prayer because prayer gives Him an opportunity to display His power. In John 14, Jesus tells us, in verses 13 to 14, that whatever we ask in His name, He'll do it, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. So the glory of the Father is the reason God wants to answer prayer, that He may display Himself.

Now I want to give you maybe a handful of, wrapping up these very practical ways in which we glorify God. You can jot them down, as Russ suggested, and follow them up in your own thinking. Let's say number 8: we glorify God by our oneness ... by our oneness. In Romans chapter 15 and verse 5, Paul by the way, as we shall see beginning next Sunday night, in chapter 14 and 15, is talking about how important it is for us to be considerate of each other. How important it is for us to look carefully on the one who might be a little weaker in the faith than we are. To look carefully at one who might be a weaker brother, who might stumble or fall at some indiscrete use of liberty, or misuse of liberty, that we might exercise. In other words, we need to be very careful how we treat each other. He opens up chapter 15 by saying that we ought to bear the weaknesses of the weak and not be concerned to please ourselves.

I was reading in the newspaper this week, you probably read it yourself, about a local football player who came back and decided he would play again for the Los Angeles Rams. And he said in spite of the holdout, he did what he felt was right. And here was the quote, "It was right for me." That's very typical of a contemporary thinking pattern. You're a part of a team but it really doesn't matter what happens to everybody else. The only thing that matters is about you and what is right for you. There is that very egotistical isolationist mentality that dominates our contemporary thinking.

But that is not to be a part of Christian thinking at all. In fact, we are not to be concerned to please ourselves. Verse 2 he says, we ought to be concerned about pleasing each other and building each other up. And the example is the example of Christ, in verse 3, who willingly bore reproaches for the sake of us and for the sake of bearing the reproach of God, Himself, as verse 3 indicates of quoting Psalm 69. So we are to be concerned with each other.

Now it comes to verse 5. And this a sort of benediction that he gives, "Now the God of patience and consolation," or comfort, "grant you to be like-minded, one toward another." In other words: don't have preference, don't have respective persons, treat everybody equally. "That you may, in your concern for one another, with one mind and one mouth," do what? Glorify God. With one mind and one mouth, glorify God.

So, verse 7: receive one another, open your heart to one another, as Christ received us. Why? To the glory of God. You remember in John 17 how that Jesus prayed, "Father that they may be one." Remember that prayer? I pray that they may be one. And the prayer of the Lord Jesus Christ was answered in the positional sense, that is in the sense that all believers that are one in Christ. He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit. We're all in the same body. We all possess the same spirit. We all have the same eternal life pulsing in us. We've all been identified in the same death and resurrection of the Lord, Jesus Christ. We all walk in the same newness of life. We're all headed for Christ's likeness. We all have the same hope of eternity. But, in spite of that oneness, in terms of the definition of who we are, very often that is not the case in how we act. And God is glorified in the unity of His people. God is glorified in the oneness of His people. I believe that's why Satan works so hard to fracture the church, to create discord and disunity and disharmony and arguments and stress and struggle and strife.

In Philippians chapter 2, a very familiar passage, the apostle Paul says if you want to really fulfill my joy, be likeminded, have the same love. That's love everybody the same. You're familiar with these things. And that means that we reach out to one another. When it says to receive one another, it means to open our arms and receive the one who is in need. It is, again, in a sense a reflection of John 13, where our Lord washed the disciples feet simply because their feet were dirty. And it was need that precipitated an act of gracious, selfless service to them.

The Lord is glorified by our oneness. The Lord is glorified by our unity. We touched on that. So let's move on to a few remaining ones.

The Lord is glorified, also, and this is something practically that we must pursue in our lives, by our obedience ... by our obedience. And I'm sure you knew we'd come to this one. It's very foundational in a Christian life that obedience be understood as the pattern of daily living. You heard the young people give testimony tonight to the fact that if anything was solidified in their thinking over the summer in their time in Montreal, it was the importance of the Word of God. And though we know that intellectually, we know that traditionally, we know that because it's all around us, it's wonderful when it is directly refreshed in our mind by having to live it out. And the Word of God is there in order that we may be instructed, in order that we may obey.

In 1 Peter 4, let's look together at a few verses there that will help us to understand this. In 1 Peter chapter 4 and verse 14, it says, "If you be reproached," and in the Greek text, the way this is constructed, it's a possibility, it's a likely thing to happen, possible. If you are reproached, if that does happen, and it is possible, "for the name of Christ, you're blessed." You're happy. "For the spirit of glory and of God, rests on you. On their part," that is those who persecute you, "He is evil spoken of, but on your part, He is," what? He's glorified. In other words, He's glorified through your suffering.

Now what is it that precipitates your suffering? It is your obedience to God. That is the implication and it is the implication, clearly stated, in verse 16, if any man suffers as a Christian. In other words, your suffering is connected to your Christ-like life pattern. You create a hostility around you. Then if that happens, don't be ashamed but let that person glorify God for this reason. In other words, you have opportunity to bring glory to God by an obedient life that becomes unacceptable to the world. They demonstrate hostility and persecution results.

Obedience to the point of persecution. Do I need to remind you that Paul in writing to Timothy, 2 Timothy 3, said anyone who wants to live Godly in this present age will suffer persecution? Do I need to remind you of the words of Jesus in John 16 in this world you shall have ... what? "Tribulation," John 16:33. Jesus even says in chapter 15, if they persecuted Me, they'll persecute you. Don't be surprised, it's bound to come. And we go into the book of Acts and the early church was so distinctly Christian, so definitively obedient to God's truth, that they were persecuted and they suffered. And the church that has been the obedient church has always been to, one degree or another, a suffering church.

Now, I'm not advocating a sort of sickly martyr complex, but I am saying that people who confront an ungodly society, with an obedient life that follows the truth of the Word of God are going to create a hostile reaction. I think there are some people today who are under that the illusion that our Christianity will always be winsome to the world. Well, it may be winsome to the degree that we live a

life that is desirable. But it will always be an offense to Satan, who rules the world. That is to say there is a tension there. And any unbeliever who gets close to Christians is going to be caught in the tension of realizing that there's something about their life that is desirable. But there is also something about their life is an overt rebuke of everything that unbeliever stands for.

So you have on the one hand something that is very inviting and very attractive. And on the other hand something that is very intimidating. And in the life where the Lord prepares the soil and the spirit does the work, the inviting character of that life might draw that person to salvation. But in that life where Satan is in control, that distinction is going to create hostility.

So we are caught in that rather paradoxical situation of living out our Christianity and realizing to those whom the Lord has chosen before the foundation of the world, it is an invitation to faith in Christ. For those who are willfully rejecting of the gospel of Jesus Christ and give no place to the Spirit's work in their heart, it is something that creates anger and resentment. And we have to anticipate that.

But our lives are to be obedient, obedient to the point of ultimate sacrifice. I want to take you back to the last chapter of John's gospel. When I was teaching this chapter many years ago, this particular account had a tremendous on my own life because I could see here the ultimate commitment of obedience that the Lord was after. Now what you need to understand, just in general, is that John 21 follows the resurrection of Jesus Christ. In the twentieth chapter of John's gospel we have the resurrection. And now in chapter 21 we have a post-resurrection scene. All of the disciples have seen the risen Christ, He has appeared to them. They have seen Him in the upper room. He has come through the door. The testimony of Thomas has been given, my Lord and my God. And so they know Christ is alive.

Now some time has passed and Jesus, after having seen them after His resurrection, tells them to go to Galilee. And He sends them into Galilee, into a mountain, and says go there and wait till I come. And they went to that place. And when they came to Galilee, it tells us in verse 2, there was Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples--probably Andrew and Philip. So you have Peter and Thomas, Nathanael, James and John, Andrew, Philip, these disciples are gathered together in a mountain in Galilee. And they're supposed to be waiting for Christ who told them to wait there till He came.

But Simon Peter, in verse 3, says to them I'm going fishing. It's erros-tenseverb and has a finality about it. It's not necessarily conclusive, but it seems to be that what he may be saying is I'm going back to my old profession. And he had a certain failure mentality anyway. It seemed like everything he did, he did wrong. And he knew that he was not adequate to the task at hand. Even though he had seen the risen Christ, he had great anxiety about being faithful because he such a history of unfaithfulness. He had not yet experienced the coming of Holy Spirit so he didn't know that infusion

of power that came on the day of Pentecost. And as he looks at his own life and the pattern of his own disobedience, he's somewhat fearful about this call to ministry that he's received. So he says to himself, in effect, there's one thing I do know how to do, and that's fish and I might as well go back to my old profession.

And so it says Peter said, "I go fishing." Because he was a leader they all said well we're going with you. He had tremendous power to lead those men. And they all come waddling down the hill headed for the boat. And they came down, and it says they entered into the boat--the Greek construction uses the definite article. The boat may be have been his own boat, picking up his old profession. And that night, of course, they caught nothing because the Lord wouldn't allow that. And this was going to be a convincing lesson to them about the fact that from now on, there was no possibility that could ever regress to being fishermen of fish when they had been called to be fishermen of men.

So they fished all night and didn't catch anything, and that's very frustrating, folks. I don't know if you've had that experience. I have had the experience of not catching anything for two hours, and that's frustrating. But all night long and by people who are convinced that they know how to fish in a place that's very familiar to them. So when morning came, Jesus stood on the shore, the disciples didn't know it was Jesus, and He said to them have you caught anything? Which could be a very irritating question to people who have been fishing all night and have not. And they said no and restrained themselves from any further epithets. He said throw your net on the right side of the boat. You know the story. They weren't even able to handle the fish. They came in. The Lord gave them breakfast, which He, Himself, created. And they ate and then He confronted Peter in verse 15. When they had finished breakfast, when they had breakfasted, literally, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of Jonah," or Jonas or John, "do you love Me more than these?" Do you love Me more than these disciples love Me? You said though all would forsake Me, you never would. Am I to believe now that you love Me more than these? You, who have retreated again to your old profession in disobedience to Me.

It's as if He's saying if you really loved Me, would be in an act of disobedience? Have you forgotten, He might have added, that I said this: whoever keeps My commandments, he it is that ... what? That loves Me. Do you not know, do you not remember that love is attached to obedience? Don't tell Me you love Me and do not what I say. So here you are, doing something other than I told you to do, caught in an act of disobedience, caught disobeying unsuccessfully, unable to catch fish. Now do you love Me more than all the rest of these? Some say the "these" means the nets and the boats and the sea and the fishing.

The point is do you really love Me? And he said--and I'm sure he said it rather sheepishly--you know that I, and he used the word felleto;you know that I have great affection for You, a word that doesn't have the strength of agopato, which the Lord used. You know that I have great affection for you. And He said to him, and I think there's a rebuke here, there's a sternness here, then stop catching fish

[implied] and do ... what? Feed My sheep. Do what I told you to do. Feed My lambs.

In 16, again he says, the second time, do you love Me? And He uses the strong word. He said to Him, "Yes, Lord. You know that I have great affection for you." He said then feed My sheep. What is He saying? He's saying get out of the boat. Get rid of the nets. And get on with what I told you to do. And He said the third time, because how many occasions were there in which Peter had denied Christ? How many? Three. So He gives him one restitution for each denial. So the third time He says do you really, and He uses Peter's word, do you really even have a strong affection for Me? As if to say, I even question that.

Peter thought he could away with that in the midst of his disobedience. I know it isn't obvious that I have the strongest love for You but I do have great affection. Jesus says I question even that. And that made Peter very, very grieved. And the reason he was grieved wasn't because he said it three times. The reason he was grieved because the third time He said do you even like Me? Do you even have a strong affection for Me? I question even that. And then Peter appealed to the omniscience of Christ and said Lord you know everything, look in my heart, You know I have a strong affection for You. And then Jesus said to him, do ... what? Feed My sheep. Feed My sheep. In other words, if you love Me you'll keep My commandments, a basic New Testament truth. 1 John 2:5, "Whosoever keeps His word, in him verily is the love of God perfected by this. Know we that we are in Him." How can you tell a true believer? By obedience.

And verse 18, follow this, "Truly, truly I say to you, when you were young, you put on your own belt and walked where you would." In other words, you called all the shots in your life when you were young. But you want to know something Peter? You're not young anymore. And you're not in charge anymore. When you were young, you did what you wanted. "But when you will be old, you will stretch out your hands and another will tie you and carry you where you would not." There was a day in your life when you were in charge. There's coming a day when you won't be in charge and someone will stretch out your hands and tie you and take where you don't want to go.

Most interestingly, the phrase "stretch forth thy hands" is used in some non-Biblical literature to speak of crucifixion, a criminal stretching out his hands for crucifixion. And a pretty reliable tradition tells us that Peter died a martyr, crucified upside down, for the sake of this gospel, which he preached. Peter, you called the shots at one time in your life, you're not calling them anymore. You went where you wanted when you were young. You put your belt where you wanted when you were young. The day is coming when someone's going to stretch your arms out and someone is going to take you where you don't want to go. And verse 19 says, "This He spoke, signifying by what death," Peter should ... what? Should glorify God.

You say you mean you can glorify God in death? Absolutely. Absolutely. You see, the whole point here was this: Peter was going to be so obedient that it would come down to the very end of his life

and someone would say you either deny Jesus Christ or you ... what? You die. And what would Peter do? He would die. Now that's obedience that glorifies God. That's the extremity of obedience. That's the epitome of commitment. And that is exactly what our Lord meant when He ministered first to the disciples along this line, recorded in Matthew 10, and said very simply to them, "Take up your cross and," what? "Follow Me."

What does it mean to take up your cross? It's not some mystical thing. What it means is being willing to ... what? To die. They saw criminals all over their nation being crucified along the roads by the Romans. They knew what is to take up your cross and there wasn't anything mystical or devotional or deeper-life about that, at all. All that meant was you'd be willing to die. In other words, what the Lord has always called for in terms of a life set for His glory is obedience to the point of being willing to give your life. Now if you're like I am, you look at yourself and you say, "Boy, I don't know if I could handle that." And then you have to realize that the spirit of grace and glory will rest on you in that kind of a trial, and God will give you the grace to do that when the time comes if your heart is right.

I mean none of us standing here now, would perhaps honestly believe that we could survive a test like that. We might want others to believe it but we might question about it our own selves. But when the time would come, God would give us the grace if our hearts were right. I mean after all there are a whole list of people, aren't there, in eleventh chapter of Hebrews. One after another who gave their lives in the cause of God's Word and God's truth. So obedience is the way we glorify God even if it is obedience to death ... to death. God will be honored. God will be exalted. God will be glorified. It does not glorify Him, when we deny Him at the point of stress.

I remember as a young boy growing up, I was fascinated with a book called, Fox's Book of Martyrs. Have any of you read Fox's Book of Martyrs? There were some books that had an indelible impression on my life when I was a junior high kid. And I don't know how I got a hold of them. One of them was Power in Prayerby EM Bounds. Another one was Imitation of Christby Thomas a Kempis, very mystical kind of book. But the other one that just intrigued me to no end was Fox's Book of Martyrs, just chronicling, and I've read that book probably a dozen times, just chronicling over and over again those people who obeyed Christ to the death. And I used to love to read about Latimer and Wrigley. And I wrote a term paper one time on a man named Savannah Rollawho was an absolutely courageous and bold preacher in Rome, when the Catholics were in power, and they finally killed him because of his proclamation. And it always fascinated me that there could be people like that. And down deep in my heart I never ever believed that I could be a person like that but that's the person I wanted to be: the person who would obey, right up to the very end, and that would glorify the Lord.

God has been gracious so far, and the worst I've had to suffer is unfair newspaper articles. But I trust that God would give me the grace for whatever, to be faithful and be obedient to the One whom was obedient to death for me. And He was unworthy of such death and I am very worthy of any death that

might come. We glorify God by obedience.

Let me give you another one. We glorify God by proclaiming His Word ... by proclaiming His Word. We should never be ashamed to speak the Word of God. Never be ashamed to articulate the Word of God. I mentioned to you some months ago that I was talking to the man who is the owner of the *Los Angeles Times*, Otis Chandler. And we were having a conversation and he said to me, he said, "You have a large congregation, you have radio ministry and so forth." He said, "You have a great audience. Why don't you ever speak out on political issues? Why don't you ever speak on the social issues of our time? Why don't you give us your opinion and lead your people in some of the very necessary social issues of the day?" And I thought for a moment and I said to him, I said, "Let me put as simply as I can. There are many, many human voices. I see myself as only having one function in life. And that one function that I have in my life is to give God an opportunity to speak. I'm only interested in letting God be heard."

So whenever I speak, I only trust and pray that it gives words, as it were, audible words to the living Word of God. I mean you really don't want my opinion. My opinion isn't worth anything. I can't even get it across to the people in my own family with much impact. As my kids remind me repeatedly, "Out of the pulpit you're just ordinary." And there is that sense in which that is abundantly true. And so there's only one desire in my heart and that is make audible the Word of God.

Look at 2 Thessalonians 3:1 and see if this wasn't on the heart of the apostle Paul. "Finally brethren," he says, and then goes on for 18 verses. I love that. It's a great insight into my preaching. "Finally brethren," sort of, "pray for us," and here's the desire of his heart, "that the Word of the Lord may have free course and be," what? "O glorified." See, God is glorified when His Word is exalted, when His word is proclaimed.

You already heard mention tonight, the testimony to the grace of God in this church. How thankful we are for what God has done through His Word, through the preaching and teaching of His Word. I was talking to Ronjef Fernando; I think I see him over here, our dear brother from Sri Lanka. I introduced him to you this morning; he's never been in the United States before. It must be quite a shock to be here. But for five years he's been spreading the Word of God in his country through our tapes, and many years before that, no doubt, teaching and still teaching and planting churches. And how wonderful it is to know him. And I know he could give us testimony to the fact that the only thing that can break the darkness of his people is the living Word of God. That penetrates that culture as is can penetrate and give light in any culture.

And Paul's prayer should be our prayer, "Pray for us that the Word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified even as it is with you". In other words, when you heard it, you Thessalonians, it changed your life. In fact, if you go back to 1 Thessalonians, what does he say in verse 9 of chapter 1, "You turned to God from idols. And you came to serve the living and true God. And that

transformation," he says in verse 8, "has echoed out all over the world." The Word of God, because it had free course among you, changed your lives. And you testimony is now spreading in every place. So that we don't even need to say anything, Paul says. So the Thessalonians had experienced the moving of the Word of God, the transforming of their lives, and through them God was glorified by that transformation wrought by the Scripture.

When, for example, you proclaim the Word of God on salvation and a life is transformed. And that person goes back into their own environment with a transformed life God is glorified. When you preach something, for example, on spiritual commitment and dedication and a marginal Christian comes to grips with really living for Christ and his life is turned around, or her life is turned around, and that person moves out to make an impact for Jesus Christ, God is glorified. When you apply the Word of God to a shattered marriage and God puts that marriage back together and through that union, again, people look and say what God is it that could put together that marriage again, and God is glorified. The same with a family, wonderful to see how God redeems the children of people in the church who are wayward and what joy and rejoicing and glory is brought to God over that.

See, whenever the Word goes forth, it potentiates God's glory. Presenting the Word gives Him glory. It honors Him because it builds up His people. Acts 20:32 Paul commends you to the Word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance. It's the Word of God isn't it, that was given by inspiration and is profitable so that you can become thoroughly furnished unto all good works. It's the Word of God that brings the body of Christ through the ministry of the saints to the fullness of the stature of Christ. It's the Word of God that brings Him glory because it's the Word of God that feeds and matures His people. It's the Word of God that transforms individuals and families and marriages. It's the Word of God that gives Him glory.

If you're going to offer anything to this world, offer them the Word of God. That's why I struggle so deeply in my own spirit over people who represent Christ or who preach or say they're preachers and teachers, but give a lot of things other than the Word of God. I don't understand that. I don't understand what the point of that is.

It is amazing to me; I was talking to a gentleman recently. And he shared with me, he's a professor in a seminary, that he felt the greatest dirthin America, presently, was a lack of expository preaching. That's a frightening thing to think about. What in the world is there beside that, beside expositing the Word of God? And recently, when Jim George came back from his trip into Asia, he said, "John, we have to find a way to train the Asians in expositing the Word of God." He said, "We introduce them to expository preaching and they never heard of it." They never heard of it.

And I was amazed, to hear today, about how many churches, Baptist churches, Methodist churches, have their church choirs and their congregations at the forum last night, to hear Faracon give his Black Muslim speech and exalt Allah. Amazing. This comes about as a result of not knowing the

Word of God, which comes about as a result of not proclaiming the Word of God. And you're right back to Isaiah, or as Paul quotes it in Romans 10, "How shall they hear except there be a preacher."

It's been a great passion and burden of my life to see young men raised up to preach the living Word of God, to preach it and proclaim it. There is nothing else. Nothing else. And I think anything less than that prostitutes the purpose of the ministry. And that's true in every Christian's life. You want to glorify God? Then remember that every time you speak, it ought to be the Word of God.

I remember in college, reading a book by Turnbull. If you ever find one his books they're very interesting. Old Ralph Turnbull was his name. But he was writing a book on evangelism. I think it was called, With Christ After the Souls of Men, or something like that. But anyway, he said that he had a life-changing commitment in his life. And it was this: he came to a point in his life where one day he fell on his knees before God. And he said this, "I vow to You, that every time I have the opportunity to introduce the topic of conversation, it will always be of Jesus Christ." Ain't it a great commitment? He vowed to God that every time he could control the topic of conversation it would always be of Jesus Christ. And he became a great winner of souls. Proclaim the Word. Teach the Word.

I also remember back in my youth when my father gave me my first Bible of any significance. I used to get those paper covered ones because I'd lose them and drop them in the water. And when I got old enough to have one that I wouldn't lose and ruin, he wrote a little note to me and signed his name and put 2 Timothy 4:2. And of course, I hurriedly looked it up and it says preach the Word. Preach the Word. And that has been a byword for me ever since.

Well, as we close, let me give two more ways to glorify God. This is hard on me because I hate to be confined to giving you all of these, so many things going on in my mind that I'd like to share. But let me give you two more.

Number 11: we glorify God by moral purity. We glorify God by moral purity. I suppose, because of time, we need only look at one passage. Would you turn with me to 1 Corinthians chapter 6 ... 1 Corinthians chapter 6. And verse 12 is a good place to start to just get an idea of what we're looking at in this area of moral purity. But do I need to say much about the world in which we live in regard to this, a world on its way to annihilation through venereal disease. We are as immoral as any society in history has ever been. And there are consequences to immorality.

But I want you to notice how the Word of God deals with it. Verse 12, Paul writes, "All things are lawful unto me. But all things are not expedient. All things are lawful for me, but I will not get entangled in the power of any." Now it seems to me that what Paul probably is doing here is giving the Corinthians something they'd heard a lot. Somebody in the Corinthian assembly was throwing around the idea: well all things are lawful to me. I mean I'm free in Christ, right? I mean I'm free! I'm

free from the law. And I'm free from sin. And I'm free from the possibility of judgment. So all things are lawful to me. I'm under grace.

But all things are not sensible. And later on in chapter 10 and verse 23, he says you don't want to do that will offend anybody. But then he says all things are lawful but you don't want to be entangled in the power of any. What they're basically offering is a theological argument for sin: well all things are lawful; I'm under grace. Paul says yeah but all things aren't sensible. Yes there's forgiveness. Yes you're free under grace. Yes the Lord will take care of it. But you certainly don't want to get tangled up in some things.

Now look at verse 13. And the argument moves a little further. If verse 12 is a theological argument for allowing sin: all things are lawful. This is what we could call a philosophical argument. And they give what must have been a little proverb used in the Corinthian society: food for the body and the body for food. That's it. Food for the body and the body for food, it's just biological. See that's all they're saying. Somebody came alive over there. That's good. But the idea is this a biological thing. I mean it's like Hugh Hefner once splattered all across America: sex is only a biological function, why is everybody so disturbed? Food for the body and body for food, that's all. That's the only way you can look at it. Sex is biological.

Paul throws in after that, and God will destroy both of them. God will destroy sex and the people who commit it. The food ... and the food is just proverbial thing. The implication of it is that it's an analogy to sex. Because he says the body is not for sex sin. But the body is for the Lord and the Lord for the body. So it isn't, well sex for the body and the body for sex, it's biological. It's the Lord for the body and the body for the Lord. Right?

"And God has both raised up the Lord and will also raise us up by His own power." You know what he's saying? He's saying you better be careful with your body. Your body belongs to the Lord and to prove it, someday, He's going to raise it in a glorified state. Right? When I think about the fact that my body someday will be transformed to be like His body, that my body will someday be glorified that helps me to think about how I want to treat this body. Right? I mean it belongs to Him and someday He's going to make like His own body.

And then in verse 15 he says, "Don't you know that your bodies are the members of Christ." Hmm. Well, thinking back for a moment in verse 12. You don't want to sin because sinning isn't sensible because you get all tangled up in it. You don't want to sin because it isn't just biological. Your body belongs to the Lord and the Lord belongs to your body. And you don't want to sin because someday that body is going to be lifted up and made like Christ's body. And you don't want to sin because your body is a literal member of Christ. What does that mean?

I express myself through my arms and my fingers. I express myself through my eyes and my nose and mouth and my feet. My members are my source of expression to the world. If I didn't have a body you wouldn't know I was around. I wouldn't have anything to communicate to you. And in real sense, we are the living expression of Christ. Are we not? Believe it folks, when I come here, or anybody, and opens the Word of God and speaks to you, we are speaking as a member of Christ in the sense that Christ communicates through us.

And so I want to be careful how I approach this matter of morality in my life. I don't want to get tangled up in it. I don't want to think of my body as belonging to sex and sex to my body, when it really belongs to the Lord. I want to think about my body as that, which He will raise to be like His forever, my being an extension of Christ through which He ministers. "Shall I then, verse 15, take the members of Christ and tie them up with a harlot?" What's the answer? No way. Nay are no, no, no, no, unthinkable, inconceivable, unacceptable.

And you say well I'm not going to get tied with a harlot I'm just going to enjoy myself. Oh. What? Verse 16, are you so stupid that you don't even though that when you join yourself to a harlot you become one body. Because the Bible says, "You shall become," what? "One flesh." When you enter into the sexual act, you literally enter into a one-flesh relationship. You glue yourself. Verse 17, you are glued to the Lord. And when you go in there and attach yourself to some harlot--and a harlot is anybody who commits fornication or adultery, not somebody who is paid for it, necessarily. So when you join yourself to someone outside the sacrednessof marriage, you join the Lord to that situation. That's unthinkable.

So he says, "As a result of this, the fact that you're joined the Lord, and when you join to a harlot, you join the harlot to the Lord." Verse 18 says you'd better do what? You'd better flee sexual sin. You'd better run because the sins that a man does outside the body, are not as bad as the one committed, committing fornication because he sins against his own body. In other words, there is a depth of sin involved in sexual sin that reaches beyond other kinds of sin. There is a deeper involvement. This may even be and allusion to venereal disease. Yes.

When you commit fornication, when you are a committer of fornication in the society in which Paul lived, you could well have contracted some venereal disease. There is a sense in which this kind of sin reaches deeper in the soul-ish sense, into the spirit of an individual, plunging them deeper into a sin, which is hard to extricate themselves from. And there is a sense in which this might even have a physical allusion as well to venereal disease.

Now having said all of that, stay away from sex, whatever the theological, philosophical arguments might be because your body belongs to the Lord. But he goes one step further. Not only does your belong to the Lord, not only is it the possession of Christ and joined to Him, but look at verse 19. And here's the key. "What? Do you not know that your body is also," what? "The temple of the Holy

Spirit, who is in you. Whom you have from God and you're not your own," now watch this, "you are bought with a price. Therefore, glorify God in your body." And the Greek text ends there.

Glorify God in your body. Now how do you do that? I'll tell you how you glorify God in your body: by avoiding what kind of sin? Sexual sin. Moral purity. Holiness. And I know we live in a world where this is flaunted and flaunted and flaunted. The number one cause of abortion in our society is basically to hide sexual promiscuity. So you can have sex without consequences. We are in a degenerate society and I know it entices Christians. And I know it is alluring to them. Simply stated, Paul says, your body belongs to the Lord. More than that, your body will be raised to be like His body. More than that, your body is joined to Christ. More than that, your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who dwells in you. Therefore, glorify God in your body. Which means set it apart from moral sin. Set it apart from moral sin.

One final way to glorify God. 2 Corinthians, over one book from where we are, chapter 4. We glorify God, and this is a simple one and a wonderful one on which to conclude. We glorify God by bring others to the Savior. We glorify God by bringing others to the Savior. What greater way? See. If my life has the potential to glorify God and I win someone to Christ, now I have another life that's a potential to glorify God. Right? So I've just doubled the potential.

That's why the goal and objective of all ministry, ultimately is to win people to Christ. I mean the object of the church is to teach and feed and build and strengthen and comfort. But ultimately you do all of that to strengthen the church, so that the church can go out and reach the lost. And we have had a strong, strong emphasis on that. And we'll continue to have in our church in recent years because the goal of everything is to win someone to Christ. It is, the way I like to put it, to add one more voice to the hallelujah chorus, to bring in another singer, another person who can live to the glory of God. That is what is so satisfying about Christian ministry. That is what is so thrilling.

Look at 2 Corinthians 4. Paul, in verse 7, says that we have the treasure, talking about the gospel, the truth about Christ, the wonderful message of Christ, the glorious gospel of Christ, he calls it back in verse 4. We have this glorious gospel of Christ in our earthen vessels. It's a beautiful treasure to put in such a crumby package, isn't it? But we have it. And we realize that whatever power there is. Whatever excellent power there is, is certainly not of us. But of whom? But of God. If anything, if the gospel can be used to reach people through us, if you can put a diamond in a dirt pile and have people see it and appreciate it, then only God could do that. So he says it's all of God.

Then he discusses how it is to minister. He says we're troubled and yet we're not distressed. We're perplexed but not in despair. We get persecuted but we're not forsaken. We're cast down but not destroyed. Philip says knocked down but not knocked out. We always seem to bear in our body the dying of the Lord Jesus. In other words, we always seem to be having people trying to kill us, trying to give us the blows they wish they could give to Christ but He's not around so we take them. And in

spite of it, the life of Jesus is magnified in our body. We're always delivered to death so that the life of Jesus may be manifest in mortal flesh. That's that earthen vessel. And so we preach and we teach, and we do what do, and we suffer what we suffer, and death is working in us. "But the result is life," look at it in verse 12, "is working in you." The price is worth it. See. The price is worth it.

And then jump down to verse 15, "For all things." Can you underline that? All things. That means all things, everything we do. Everything we do is for your sakes. All of it: all the distress, the trouble, the perplexity, the persecution, all the wounds, the punishment, the persecution that comes in the way of trying to kill us, all of it, and all of our preaching and all of our teaching and all praying and all of our hoping and all of our ministry, all of it is for Your sake. What? To accomplish what?

"That the overflowing grace," saving grace, redeeming grace, "might, through the thanks giving of many, redound to the glory of God." What are you after, Paul? I'm after this: I want you to get saved so that you can be thankful and that many can be thankful. And the thanks giving of all the many that have received abundant grace will bounce all over eternity to the glory of God. You see the point? We glorify God by bringing others to Him. And he says it's in the cause, in verse 16, that we don't faint. We stay with it and our outward man perishes all the time but the inner man is renewed day by day.

And the light affliction that we have to endure, which comes for just a moment, is working in us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. In other words, we're bringing You glory, O God. And we're willing to be afflicted for that because we don't look at things that you can see, we look at things which you can't see. We don't look at things that are temporal and earthly and passing, but things which are ... what? Eternal. So you get your eternal focus and you give your life up in an effort to win others to Jesus Christ. There's no other reason to live, people. Remember we went over that? There's no other reason to live.

You see, if we were saved for fellowship, God would take us out of here so we could get on with the fellowship, remember? We wouldn't be here. If God redeemed us for fellowship, then let's get there and get the fellowship perfect so we don't have to fool around with all the people messing up the fellowship. Say, we were saved so that we can learn the Word of God? No. If that was the case we'd go to Heaven too, because as soon as we get to Heaven, we'll have perfect knowledge. So let's get out of here, we don't have to study anymore.

No. We aren't saved and left to the earth for fellowship, although that's an important part of our strengthening. And we aren't saved and left here just so we can learn, although that's an important part of our strengthening. We're left here to be strengthened in those things, so that we may reach the lost that are still here. And so whatever we do, is for their sake that they can glorify God. And there will be more and more and more and more people offering Him thanks giving for His abundant grace.

Ask yourself a simple question: is this the consuming goal of your life, to glorify God? Is this your desire? Someday in Heaven, we'll glorify Him perfectly. We'll sing the hallelujahs. We'll offer Him the praise. There will be no sin. It will be just the way it's supposed to be. But He deserves it now. It shouldn't be that He has to wait to hear it. Our lives should be now geared to His glory.

Remember Ephesians 3:21, which I have mentioned to you, "Unto to Him be glory in the church." He is to be glorified now in the life of believers in the church. He is worthy. In fact, the great benediction at the end of Philippians says, "Now." You get that? That's the word you ought to circle. "Now unto God and our Father be glory forever and ever." It's going to be forever and ever, but it ought to start ... when? Now. Of course, I suppose for many people the only thing they know about glorifying God is when they come to church and sing a song. But it really ought to be a way of life. These are the basics without which no spiritual growth can occur, with these, great spiritual growth, profound blessing.

Let's bow in prayer. Lord, it's been so good to go over these things the last few weeks. And we praise Your name. We are those who, having been redeemed, desire to offer You glory. We thank You Lord, that You've given us that capacity. We thank You that in spite of ourselves, in spite of the fact that we are, at best, earthen vessels, that we can carry in these earthen vessels a treasure of infinite glory: the truth of Christ, the Word of God. Father, help us to be faithful. To live our lives, in every sense, in every waking moment, to Your glory. That is our desire. And help us to understand these practical ways, to implement that. That we might do those things which will honor You who have so honored us who are unworthy with redeeming love and saving grace. Thank You. For Christ's sake, amen.

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