

Living a God-Focused Life

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[0:00] 2 Timothy chapter 1, and we'll read verses 3 through verse 12. For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.

For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love, and of self-discipline. So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord or ashamed of me, his prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel by the power of God who has saved us and called us to a holy life, not because of anything we have done, but because of his own purpose and grace.

This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

And of this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher. That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet I am not ashamed because I know whom I have believed and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day.

Please turn with me again to 2 Timothy chapter 1. Paul and Timothy are among those saints who have rested from their labors that we will one day see in glory.

[1:55] And we can look forward to that day and learn something more of what Paul meant to Timothy, what Timothy meant to him. Tonight we dig back into this letter from Paul to his son in the faith.

And he writes about the gospel. The gospel is the most radical, life-changing truth that could ever be known. It's the message whereby we may be saved from our sin and misery.

We speak of the gospel often around here. We talk about not being ashamed of the gospel. We talk about believing the gospel.

How the gospel is the only message that can save sinners. We make effort to proclaim the gospel. We summarize the truth of the gospel.

We support the work of spreading the gospel to the ends of the earth. Because it is the message whereby men may be saved. But I hope tonight that we can see that the gospel is more than a message about how we can be saved.

[3:07] It is a message that ought to change the way we live. It has implications for all of life. And so, we'll take a few moments tonight to consider Paul's summary of the gospel here.

What it is and how it should radically change us in the way we live. Here in verses 9 and 10, Paul has just spoken of the power of God. And as soon as he gets to the name God, he does this sometimes, he pauses to marvel at the goodness of God and what he's done.

To speak of the truth of what God has done for us. He's in the middle of exhorting Timothy, fulfill your ministry, hold on to the truth, proclaim it to others, don't be ashamed of it.

And it's a motivation to Timothy to do those things. Keep on ministering the truth. Don't be ashamed of the truth. He reminds him of what that truth is. Gives him a summary of it. To push him forward in living for that truth.

And a motivation for us as well. And seeing the greatness of the glory of God and what he's done, we should be encouraged to go and live for him. And so, Calvin says, from the greatness of the benefit, he shows how much we owe to God.

[4:17] For the salvation which he has bestowed on us easily swallows up all the evils that must be endured in this world. We're going to face a lot of trouble in this world. The good news of the gospel is greater than all of it.

And so, instead of being overwhelmed by the trouble and suffering that we face in the world, because of our allegiance to the Christ of the gospel, the glory of the gospel should overcome that trouble and suffering we face.

It's though Paul were saying, it's worth it. And all of the suffering, all of the difficulty you face, it's worth it. Because of the truth that I'm about to summarize for you.

You can be compared to motivation for a basketball team. You're suffering through conditioning. It's painful. It hurts. You're doing suicides. You're doing sprints. You're down on the floor. You're back up. And you begin to lose sight of the goal.

Nobody likes it. It's not pleasant, but a wise coach will provide some motivation. Look at the great potential that could come from all of this hard work. Look at the payoff down the road when you'll be able to outlast other teams in the fourth quarter, because they're not able to keep up with you.

[5:21] You're not worn out like they are. It'll pay off in wins in a sectional, a regional, or a state championship. It's locker room bulletin board material. He puts this up here. Timothy, remember the grace of God, the life that Christ gives, the incorruptible life, and let that motivate you to keep going.

The summary of truth should go on Timothy's bulletin board above his desk in Ephesus. And we would do well to keep it before us as well. The God who's called us into service.

The one who has asked us even to suffer for His namesake is the one who gives us the power necessary. Remember what we read in verse 8, what we saw last week. Join with me in suffering for the gospel by the power of God.

And then this is what Timothy wants, or what he wants Timothy to remember about this God who gives us power to suffer for Him. Verse 9, So what is this gospel?

And how does it radically change us? These are two things we want to see tonight. What is this gospel? And how does it motivate us to change? To be radically different than we once were? First of all, what is the gospel?

[6:49] Three things. God is sovereign in salvation. Grace is given. And Christ gives life. God is sovereign, first of all. It begins with God and not us.

A lot of times when you hear the gospel message presented, it begins with us. And that's not the right place to start. The only way man can be made right with God is if God begins that work, if He does the work, if He saves the sinner.

And so that's where Paul starts. We were headed to a deserved eternity in hell. Slaves to sin. And He delivered us from that way of life and from the death we were headed for and makes us servants of Him and takes us safely home to heaven.

You can already see the radical change. It's a change of destination. Instead of hell, it's heaven. God has done this work. It's not God plus you or your works or the church or anything else.

God saved us. And that's the sort of message that fills us with humility, with gratitude. It's the kind of thing we should remember at Thanksgiving and every day that God has saved us.

[7:51] And so there's one change already. The gospel should produce it to make us a thankful people. Instead of being a selfish, unsatisfied, discontented people, we should be thankful always. God saved us.

He called us to a holy calling or a life of holiness. In a moment, we'll talk about are you living up what God has called you to be? He's called you to a life of holiness. That's part of the radical change the gospel brings.

Instead of life of wickedness, it's one of holiness. But for now, simply notice that what God does can't be undone. If He's called you to a life of holiness, you can't fail to follow.

Romans 11.29 For God's gifts and His call are irrevocable. The life that we receive from Christ is incorruptible. It can't be taken away from us because God's calling is sure.

It's not according to our works. A note sounded again and again throughout Paul's letters. It sounded again here when he writes to Titus. He said He saved us not because of righteous things we had done, but because of His mercy.

[8:56] And I know that these things are familiar. We know the gospel. We know that God saved us. We know that it's not according to works. Don't let the familiarity with it bore you. Be amazed again afresh at what God has done for us in Christ.

Remember, as Paul says here, that it's according to His own purpose and grace. It's His plan. The idea originates with Him and it is completed by Him. And that provides, as one commentator says, a solid ground for assurance.

Can you imagine if salvation were left in your hands? If God left it up to you to be saved, you have to purpose it. You have to do it. Would it ever get done? No.

We wouldn't have the first inkling of wanting to seek after God. We wouldn't purpose it. And even if we did purpose in our hearts, you know, I'm going to seek after God. I'm going to make myself right. We couldn't do it. And even if we tried to do it, we could never be sure that we have done enough. And there's no assurance there. But when it's according to God's purpose, which cannot be thwarted, which cannot be turned aside, then it's sure. Then there's ground for confidence.

[10:01] It's according to His purpose and grace. Whatever He purposes, He does. And so He gives us grace. Instead of requiring that we earn our salvation, which we could never do, He gives it freely.

Everything here points away from us and it points to God. So who should receive the glory for it? Well, of course, the God who gives these gifts. The God who has saved us. None of the glory goes to us.

So first, God is sovereign in salvation. But secondly, grace is given. And of course, it's given by God. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time. Before time began. And of course it was given. Grace, by definition, can't be earned. We didn't earn it. God didn't look and say, there's somebody that's deserving. I'll show them grace. Grace is something that we can't be deserving of.

In fact, we deserve the opposite. But God gives us blessing instead of curses. We receive pardon instead of punishment. God's favor instead of His wrath. We go to heaven instead of hell.

[11:03] This is the free gift of grace. What a remarkable thing. God shows grace to undeserving sinners. And He made that grace, or He gave us that grace before time began.

Before the beginning of time. William Hendrickson says, time like an ever-rolling stream. We sing that in one of our hymns. Like an ever-rolling stream. And Hendrickson says, time flows on and on and on.

But before it even began, before that stream of time began, we were already included in the gracious purpose of God. And we don't receive that grace until here we are in history.

God's showing us that grace now, but He determined before the world was made to show us grace. The Father, the Son, and the Spirit covenanted before creation, before time.

In these verses, as we move from eternity before time into history. It's a neat progression that we see here. But before time even began, which we can't comprehend, but way back then, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit covenanted together.

[12:11] Called the covenant of redemption to save a people. A particular people. And God determined then to show grace to His chosen people. And Christ came, and that grace was shown to us in Christ and the Spirit comes and He applies that work in our hearts.

In history, before time began, God determined to show us grace. Ephesians 1.11, In Him, we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of Him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of His will.

You hear that purpose language again. God purposed to do it and He did it. And that grace has been made known to us through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus. It wasn't like our purposes that we...

I've got good intentions, I'm going to purpose to do something, but I don't always get to it. We're going to get the leaves raked. We're going to get the Christmas decorations up. I've got all these purposes, but we don't always get to all of them, do we?

Because our purpose is is thwartable. Things come up and things turn us aside. And you know how that is. You have busy lives and everything you want to get done doesn't always get done. Not that way with God.

[13:18] He brought it to pass with the coming of His Son into the world. God gave us grace in Christ before time began and revealed it in history in the appearance of Christ.

His grace manifested in Christ coming to earth as a man to save men from their sins. And you know what that is? That's the message that we remember at Christmas, right? What's Christmas all about, kids?

I've got to constantly remind my children of this. It's not about presents. It's not about lights. And all of those things are good. And we do those things at our house. It's not even all about Santa.

It's especially not all about Santa. It's about Jesus coming into the world to save sinners. And so, in our house, there's no Christmas music before Thanksgiving.

That's the rule. Every now and then, we break it. But no Christmas music before Thanksgiving. So it's after Thanksgiving so we can start thinking about Christmas now. And what we should remember is that Jesus came into the world to show us the grace of God.

[14 : 20] He appeared. And in His appearing, God's grace that was determined before time was shown to us. And so, God is sovereign. Grace is given.

And thirdly, Christ gives life. That grace is demonstrated in the coming of Christ. And Paul sums it up in terms of life and death. It doesn't get any more radical than that. Christ abolished death. Verse 10, but it is now, the grace has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Jesus Christ, who has destroyed or abolished death and has brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel.

He abolished it. He took away its effectiveness or its power. For those recipients of the grace of God, death can no longer do what it once could do. It'll still end your physical life.

You'll still die. But now, it cannot lead any longer for those in Christ to an eternal death of torment and agony under God's wrath in hell because Christ has absorbed that wrath in our place.

[15 : 23] That's how God shows us His grace in His Son. 1 Corinthians 15, 26, the last enemy to be destroyed is death. And you know what?

Christ has come and is victorious over death. 1 Corinthians 15, 54, and following, death has been swallowed up in victory. Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting? The sting of death is sin and the power of sin is the law, but thanks be to God, He gives us the victory through who?

Our Lord Jesus Christ. He's won the victory over death. And so, as Matthew Henry says, death now, instead of an enemy, has become a friend.

You ever think about death as your friend? Instead of an enemy, death is a friend. It is the gate by which we pass out of a troublesome, vexatious, sinful world into a world of perfect peace and purity. And the power thereof is broken, for death does not triumph over those who believe the Gospel, but they triumph over it. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?

[16 : 34] And what a comfort for Timothy. What a motivation for Timothy. Timothy, you're facing trouble in Ephesus, but nobody there is threatening to kill you. But even if they did, and let me tell you, this is Paul writing, and he's on his deathbed, he's about to be executed for his faith in Christ, his faithful service to Christ.

Even if you were facing that, Timothy, you could press on in service to God. Because death no longer has that fear for you. Christ has conquered it and He's given you incorruptible life.

Put that on the bulletin board, Timothy. Incorruptible life. Death has been abolished by the work of Christ. So press on in service to God. And so, Paul can say, and you know what, you can say it too, Philippians 1.21, for me to live is Christ and to die is gain.

And we can say it honestly because Christ has abolished death. And He's brought to light life and immortality. It's the flip side of abolishing death. Bringing to light life and immortality.

Since our first representative, Adam, none of us could have life in and of ourselves. We all die because we all sin. But with the appearance of Christ, He brings this life and immortality to light.

[17 : 50] He brings it out into the open. He makes it available to all who trust in Him. He supplies it to all who trust in Him. Death is not the only option. Eternal death remains for those who don't trust in Christ.

But for those who trust in Him, there's glorious, eternal, unending, joyful life. Not just physical existence.

Not just survival. Abundant life. And in the life to come, eternal life. Immortality or incorruptibility. Life that can't be destroyed.

It can't be taken away. It can't come to an end. 1 Corinthians 15.42, so will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable.

It is raised imperishable. Incorruptible. Immortal. This is the glory of the life earned for us by Christ. For all who trust in Christ.

[18 : 47] Were they trusted in Him before He came? Looking for the coming Messiah? Or like us now, looking back on the coming of Christ. All who believe in Him received this life. Could there be any clearer manifestation of God's grace?

We deserve eternal death and instead we receive eternal life. Through Christ. And all of this, says Paul, through the Gospel.

Through the things that make up the content of the message of the good news. His perfect life. His atoning death. His mighty resurrection. His glorious ascension. This is how Christ has accomplished this abolishing of death.

This giving of life. It's marvelous. Glorious. Life changing truth. Life changing.

And so if it doesn't make a difference in your life. I believe the Gospel. I've been saved. But I'm still living the way I've always lived. Then you haven't really understood the Gospel. You haven't felt and seen its life changing effects.

[19 : 49] And so having seen just something briefly of the Gospel that Paul describes for us here. We want to consider now secondly, how does the Gospel radically change us?

This is the God that has called you to serve us. He's called you to follow after Him. And He has done of all these things for you. He's done. He's given you grace.

He's given us Christ. And in Him abolished death. He's given us life. How could we not serve the One who has done all of these things for us? Motivates us to endure any difficulty and press on towards that eternal life.

You see how the great blessing outweighs any negatives that could come. The life we're given is incorruptible. And so how could any finite difficulties, troubles, trials, temptations over here taint the glory of what Christ has given us?

How could it bring us down to the point where we say, you know what? I can't serve You, God. The difficulty is too great. The suffering is too much. The temptations are too hard. But don't forget what God has done for us.

[20 : 56] This glorious life He's given us. And we want to see something of that here. What has He called us to? Verse 9. He has saved us and called us to a holy life. A holy calling.

It's not just that we're called to be children of God and we go on living however we please. No, we're called to live as children of God. A high and holy calling. 1 Peter 2 and verse 9. But you are a chosen people.

A royal priesthood. A holy nation. A people belonging to God that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light. It's that radical. Out of darkness to light.

From death to life. And we go from blaspheming or at least being indifferent about God to declaring His praises. It makes a difference in the way we live. We praise Him instead of cursing Him.

You see, it's not just salvation from hell. It's salvation unto a life that's totally changed. One of service to God. Not one of sin any longer. Ephesians 1.4 He chose us in Him before the creation of the world.

[21 : 56] There it is again. Before time began. Before the creation of the world. To be holy and blameless in His sight. Why did He choose us? Not just to save us from the penalty of our sin, but to save us from the power of it so that we no longer live in it, but rather are holy and blameless.

We no longer live for ourselves. The Gospel takes us from the top rung of the ladder of our lives and puts us right down at the bottom where we belong. Instead of putting ourselves first, thinking we are the most important thing, God becomes the most important thing and we live for Him.

And so the question tonight is, are you living the life God has called you to live? Are you living up to your holy calling as the Gospel changed you? How is He working holiness and likeness to Christ in you if you claim tonight to be a follower of Christ?

One who has believed the Gospel. Let's touch on some specifics. It's such a broad field. He's called us to a holy calling. There's so many things we could talk about. Let's just talk about a few. Are you husbands loving your wife as Christ loves the church?

You know what an unsaved man will do? He'll love himself first and best and take care of himself first and best. But a man who is called to a high, a holy calling, will love God first and will put others before himself, most of all his wife.

[23 : 23] Are you husbands here tonight doing that for your wife? Are you nurturing her, caring for her, providing for you, delighting in the wife of your youth? Or are you finding sinful gratification elsewhere, online or on TV or at the mall or in the magazines or with someone at work?

That is not the calling God has given you. He's called you to love your wife. Are you doing it? Loving her, leading her as Christ did the church.

See, God's taken you from your old selfish way of life. You can't live that way anymore. Where you live for me first and only. No, it's God first and others before yourself.

Say the temptation's too hard. Well, you can overcome that temptation by remembering the great blessing that God has given. He's called you to a holy calling. And his calling is irrevocable. Are you living up to it? Has the gospel changed your life in that way? Are you wives loving and respecting your husbands? Easier said than done, isn't it? Again, a woman who lives only for herself will seek only her own good and will not be a godly wife.

[24 : 32] What a different salvation makes. God's called you not to live for yourself anymore. You have a greater goal, a higher calling, and it will be reflected in your spirit towards your husband, one that is submissive and supportive and strong.

And what a blessing it is when God has called both the husband and the wife to the same holy calling. Then your goals are the same. You're both pursuing the same thing.

You want to see God honored. And your goals mesh. And instead of fighting against one another, you're pursuing the same thing. And if both of you are putting God first, then that works because you're not putting me first.

And it's God's concern to put both of you and to work good for both of you. What unity that produces in marriage. Is there trouble in your marriage? Both of you look and see if you're living up to your holy calling.

What about you children that profess faith in Christ? Young people, are you walking not just in outward obedience to your parents, but in true inward heart, glad obedience to mom and dad?

[25 : 39] Once you were wickedly independent, didn't see the need for mom and dad or their rules, didn't want any part of that. But when God changes your heart, He opens your eyes. He sees that God has given you a gift, a blessing in your parents.

It changes your whole attitude towards them. Has your attitude with your profession of faith in Christ changed towards your parents? It should. He's called you to a holy calling and if it hasn't changed, you need to say, am I really believing?

Am I really trusting in Christ? You and your parents on the same page? You both follow Christ? Good. It should do wonders for your relationship if you're both pursuing that high calling.

Has your love for the Word of God who saved you? Has your love for Him and His Word grown? God comes along. He snatches us out of the clutches of hell itself.

Shouldn't we want to listen to Him? Shouldn't we love His Word? The One who has done so much for us, shouldn't we listen to what He says? Somebody comes along and saves your physical life, you're going to have some special regard for what they say.

[26 : 45] You're going to love them. You're going to appreciate them more. You're going to thank them. Do you do that with God who saved your soul? Far more than saving your life, He saved your eternal life.

And so do you love His Word? Do you love to read it? Love to hear it preached? Do you ever notice the difference in someone in church after God has saved them before they didn't care? They daydreamed.

They slept. They felt disgusted. They sighed when you said something they didn't like. Somebody's attitude when they're listening to something they don't want to hear. But then God does this work and it changes their heart and then you see them in church and it's no longer that bored look, that sleeping, that daydream.

They're eager to listen. You can see it in their face. They sit forward and they soak it up and they love God's Word. They take it home with them and they keep looking in that mirror. It changes the way they live because the Gospel has changed their hearts.

Is this your Gospel changed attitude towards the Word? Do you love it? Do you not just say that you love it, but do your actions show that you love it? The holy calling He's given us.

[27 : 47] What about honoring God's holy day? Do you delight in the Lord's day in a way that you never could before God saved you and made you His? Before you wanted to do whatever you wanted to do on His day.

Do you now delight to do what pleases Him instead of seeking your own pleasure? You see, it's a radical change of perspective. Instead of looking at the world through me-colored glasses, we see it through God's eyes.

Go on and on. We could touch on every area of holiness, every commandment tonight. I trust the point is clear. God has called us to a holy calling in every area of your life.

Examine yourself. Are you living up to that calling? And if not, is your faith genuine? Put it up on the bulletin board. I'm called to a holy calling.

I'm tempted to sin. No, a holy calling. God's called me to something better than what I once did. He's called you to be something better than you once were. And so why are you living like you once did in the past?

[28 : 49] You called us something better than that. Put that on the bulletin board. Holy calling. Motivates you to live up to it. And if tonight, by God's grace, and I trust there's many here that will be able to say this and say, not perfectly, but by God's grace, step by step, I'm seeking to live up to that.

Holy calling God has given me. Don't get cocky. Don't be proud. I'm pretty good. I'm pretty holy. I'm living up to my calling because the Gospel takes that pride and it dashes it too.

It makes us a humble people. Remember 1 Corinthians 26. Brothers, 1 Corinthians 1.26 and the verses after it. Brothers, think of what you were when you were called.

Remember, God has called us to a holy calling. Think of what you were when God called you. When He called you out of your sin. Back before you were saved. Think about that. Think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards.

Not many were influential. Not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise. God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong.

[29 : 54] He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things and the things that are not to nullify the things that are so that no one may boast before Him. It is because of Him that you are in Christ Jesus who has become for us wisdom from God.

That is our righteousness, holiness, and redemption. Therefore, it is written, let him who boasts, boast in the Lord. Are you living up to your holy calling? Praise God for it tonight.

Christ is your righteousness. It's not you. It's Him working in you. Thank Him for it. Praise Him for it. And remember, when He called you, you were foolish and weak and lowly and despised.

And the things that are not, it's because of Him. Because of what He has done. So you're tempted to be proud of what you have done, your holiness. Put that aside.

Pride is something that we'll fight until the day that we die. But if we remember the power of God by His Spirit dwelling in us, by God's grace, we can even win that battle with pride.

[30 : 56] And your pride is so insidious that we can even become proud of our humility. You say, I've got both of those. I'm living up to my holy calling and I'm being humble about it. I'm doing really good at being humble about it.

And pride does that. We can be proud of being humble. And then we can be proud of being humble that we're humble about our humility. And it just, it's deceitful.

So pray that God would help you to live up to the high calling of humility. You know, that basketball team motivated by those hard practices, through those hard practices, by the thought of future success and winning.

What happens when those wins start coming? Some teams start to get a little cocky, a little arrogant, a little proud. You know what happens a lot of times when they do that?

They fall flat. They lose a game to a team they shouldn't have lost a game to and they're humbled again. May we stay humble in the face even of success and holiness.

[31 : 54] Knowing that it's God working in us. It's a high calling. A holy calling. And you see, what we see in these verses, the idea that we get is that it's all about God and not about us.

It's because of His purpose. His grace. It's His calling on our life. It's Him that gave us grace in Christ Jesus. It's Christ that worked. It's about God. It's not about us. It's His purpose.

Not ours. Romans 8.28. Not only was it God's purpose to save us, it's His purpose to continue doing us good. We know that in all things, God works for the good of those who love Him and have been called according to His purpose.

God called us for His purpose. Not our own. He didn't call us apart from the world and then say, I want you to pursue everything that you want in this life.

I've called you to do whatever you want. No, He's called us for His purposes. To live for Him. 1 Corinthians 6.19-20. And 20. Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you've received from God?

[32 : 56] You are not your own. You are not your own, child of God. You were bought at a price. Therefore, honor God with your body.

We're called for His purpose. Not our own. And so, everything that we do, everything that we should do, everything we do should have a view not to ourselves and our own good.

Remember, God's taking care of that. He's working all things together. So, we don't pursue our own good. We pursue the glory of God. 1 Corinthians 10:31. So, whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.

That's the radical change the Gospel brings. Instead of living for ourselves, we live for the One who has bought us, who has given us life, who has abolished death for us, who has shown us His grace in Christ.

Everything that we do for Him. Your work. Your employment. Your schoolwork.

[34:04] All of these are things that are to be done with a view to God and His glory and not ourselves. Your work. Your schoolwork. Your homework. Your yard work. Your free time. Your sports practices and games.

Planning for your children's future. Renting a movie. Turning on the radio. Visiting family. Your morning workout. The meals that you make and the meals that you eat. Your vacations.

Decorating the house for the holidays. Shopping. Family night. Time spent with your friends.

Getting out of bed in the morning. Putting on your makeup. Your clothing selection. In the store and when you decide what you're going to wear that day.

You're eating. You're sitting down to watch some TV. You're going to the game. You're doing laundry. You're applying for college. You're going to college. Your family worship. You're going to church. Your personal devotions and a thousand other things that you do every day.

All of them to be done with a view to God and His glory and not just for ourselves. Our perspective.

People of God, I believe we have a dangerous tendency to think otherwise.

[35:08] And I've had to start reevaluating my own life in these terms. I think we have a dangerous, dangerous tendency to think something like this. Oh yes, I live for God who's been so good to me. I try to live up to my holy calling.

I try to obey Him. I try to keep all of His commands. I live for God who's been good to me. I go to church. I do my devotions and I do them every day. I don't just...

I'm not one of those Sunday Christians you talk about. I try to live for Christ every day and to be a faithful witness every day. But we isolate those things that we do for God.

Obedying Him. Worshipping Him. Reading His Word. Being a witness for Him. We isolate those things that we do for God from the things that we do for ourselves. Like work.

And earn money. And go to school. And watch TV and so on. And the reality is that everything that we do is to be done for God and His glory and His kingdom. He's called us. We live for Him. Not for ourselves.

[36:05] Every moment of every day. Everything that we do. What is the purpose for it? Why am I doing it? Why am I driving down the road at this particular moment? Where am I going? How is that going to bring glory for God?

How is it going to do good for His kingdom? How is it going to further my pursuit of holiness? Let's take two examples and sort of flesh that idea out just a little bit.

And these are... Well, how can you mow the lawn for God's glory? How can you mow the lawn with an eye to God and not just you're part of the rat race. You've made money and you've got a house and you've got to pay for it and you've got to maintain it and you want to have a nice family.

These are all things the world strives after. And it's fine and it's good and it's right to have them. But for the world, it's all about them. And this is it. They've got the house and the yard and maybe a boat and that's it.

We got it. And work all day so they can have it. And that's where it stops. But what about you? What about the way you mow your lawn? Is it different than the way your neighbor mows his lawn?

[37:05] I'm not talking about mowing your lawn in a suit or doing it with a Bible in your hands. I wouldn't recommend that. You lose a foot or a finger or something. That's not what I mean. Why do you do it? Well, remember that you're living in the house that God has provided for you and the yard that He's given you with the family that God has given you to raise and to provide for them so that they too might know the Gospel and live for Him.

And so, instead of letting your yard go and the place beginning to look like a dump which can give a poor impression to your neighbors. Their yard looks like that. What does the rest of their life look like? And it can give a poor impression to your own family.

Maintain it as a good steward honoring the God who's given you this and every good gift. You can aim to be an example of diligence and careful work to your children because that's what God calls us to.

Diligence, careful work, orderliness, and not disorder. You demand precision of them and their homework and being on time and family worship and their devotions.

But they see a lack of that thing in the way you maintain your yard and you've lost some capital with your children. And so as you mow, you can be thankful that God has given you the strength to be able to do it. When you mow, look up, figuratively, and not just down.

[38:19] People, even Christians, I think, spend most of their time looking down. Only looking at this world. I've got to make money. I've got to provide for my family. I've got to get my kids to school. And they forget the bigger perspective that we are Christians living in this world, that this world is not our home.

It's a temporary place. We're just passing through. While we're here, we're good stewards of what God has given us and so we mow our lawn. But there's something far greater that we should be pointing to and thinking about.

Be looking upward as you walk through your life. Remember that God's eye is always on you, that you're always in His presence. That's a gospel-changed life. Mow your lawn that way.

How can you watch a movie with this sort of perspective? How can you watch a movie with an eye to God? I think entertainment is one area where we can be very selfish.

It's all about us. But it shouldn't be. And make no mistake, I think you can and should even take times for rest.

[39:20] God's built rest into the creation structure. He gave us a Sabbath. A day of rest.

Employers understand that you need a break. You need some time away so they give their employees vacations because if you make them work all year long without a stop, long hours, they're going to burn out and they're not going to be very good employees anymore or they'll be gone.

Understand that you need break. You need a rest sometimes and a movie is a way that you can rest. Your body can even relax your brain sometimes watching a movie. And the rest that comes from that can be good if we are energized then to continue in our calling given us by God.

But there's more than that. God has given us a capacity to appreciate the good things that He's given us in life. He's given us a capacity to appreciate humor, for example. He's given us that gift and it's to be enjoyed.

It's to be delighted in. And we can thank God for that ability. And we guard carefully by not watching things that glorify sin or that cause us to sin or that pollute us with the world.

You can take that movie then and use it as an opportunity to engage your children in discussions of worldview or engage non-Christians who've seen the same movie. Don't let it be entertainment just for entertainment's sake. It can be good if it's not for purely selfish motives.

[40:37] I grow weary sometimes of seeing Christians who are very glum and sort of dour and sour and not very joyful.

And it's almost as though they think they deserve that. I think that's the way the Christian life is supposed to be lived. Without joy. We can't enjoy all of these good things. No.

Paul told Timothy early that good gifts are to be enjoyed by God. Or good gifts of God are to be enjoyed by us. Our lives are not designed to just mechanically advance the kingdom of God.

Our lives are to be dynamic interactions with the marvelous world God has made. It's not a dry, dull life that He's called us to. It's an abundant, joyful life. And we find joy in the different things that God has given us and enables us to do and appreciate.

We are to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. A lot of times, I think we forget the second part of that. One of the ways we enjoy God is enjoying the creation that He's made, the people that He's made, the gifts that He has given to people.

[41:42] We can enjoy those things and in enjoying them, enjoy the God who gave them. So you can watch a movie that way. You can enjoy God watching a movie, being entertained and having a rest.

And so we must keep that perspective that we find joy in God and what He has given us and what He has enabled us to do. He's given us good gifts like a beautifully mowed lawn.

The ability to enjoy a movie or a sporting event. Remember, our chief end is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. Not just to enjoy ourselves. That's not the chief end of man. To glorify God and enjoy ourselves forever, but to enjoy Him.

Make sure you remember that as you enjoy the things that God has given. Enjoy Him. Keep that perspective. And so you go through your life, every part of it, every moment of every day, and see how every aspect of it can be lived, not for yourself, but for God's glory.

We need radically God-centered, gospel-changed lives. That's what the gospel produces. You profess faith in Christ, and God changed your life like that.

[42:52] Where everything that you do, you have an eye to God. Not to yourself. Not for your own good, but for His glory. You're going down the path of life.

Maybe you're driving down the road. You're taking your kid to school. Why am I doing this today? Well, I want him to learn. I want him to learn about the world that God has made. And if he's not getting that perspective at school, I'm going to enforce it when he gets home.

And I want him to see that God's world is orderly and that 2 plus 2 is always 4. I don't care what New Math says. I want them to see this remarkable world God has made. And I want my children to go up to know and love this Savior.

See your focus as you're going down the road. We're on our way to heaven. And on our way there, our goal is to honor God in this world and to bring as many others with us as we can, bearing witness for Him.

And so remember too that everything that you do is a witness to the people around you. Live your life with that gospel-centered perspective. How can we who have received these gifts of God, He's chosen us.

[43:55] He's saved us. He's called us to a holy life. Not because of us, but by His own purpose in His grace. Grace given to us in Christ Jesus before time began, but now revealed through the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ who's destroyed death and brought about life or brought life and immortality to light to the gospel.

God who has done all these things, how could we not live for Him? How could we not serve Him? How could we not love Him? Some trial coming up. Some obstacle.

Look at the bulletin board. God has saved me. He's called me to holy life. I can't give in to that temptation. It's His purpose that I'm living for.

He purposed to save me. He's shown me His grace and so my purpose is to live for Him and not for myself. And oh, this life is difficult, but oh, there's something better. There's incorruptible life waiting for me.

What's on your bulletin board? What's motivating you? It should be this message of the gospel. But no doubt, there are some tonight here who don't profess faith in Christ.

[45:00] Who haven't yet been called by God. Who are still walking in darkness. Who are still on their way to eternal death. Do you know that tonight, instead of death, you can have life.

You can have the great joy and privilege of living for Christ. You say, I don't like all this talk of not putting me first. I like putting me first. I am the most important thing. And if I follow Christ, that's not going to be the case anymore.

So, I want no part of your gospel. Because I want me first. I want me to be the most important thing. Let me just tell you one thing tonight. I would much rather have God treating me as the most important thing.

Jesus putting me first before Himself. Rather than treating myself that way. I would rather have God working all things together for my good than me doing my best to work all things together for my good.

I can work as hard as I want for good for me. I work really hard to bring about good things for me. And I might scrape together a few pennies. I might make sort of an okay life. But it will be empty. There is no real lasting satisfaction in you working good for yourself because the end of it is still death.

[46:12] But if you come to Christ, yes, you've got to put yourself last. You've got to move yourself down to the bottom. But you know what? Christ takes you and He's put you before Himself. He gave up the glory of Heaven for His people.

He put you first that you might be saved. And then you've got God working all things together for your good. And there's no greater glory. There's no better good that you could come up with on

your own.

And so come and join with us in receiving these great blessings. Pray to God that He would call you and show you His grace. Come to Him in repentance and faith tonight.

Beg Him to save you. Remember, it's God that saves. So say, God, have mercy on me, this sinner. Save me. And you too can have God working all things together for your good.

Some people have me on their bulletin board. Me. And that motivates them. They get up in the morning and they look at their bulletin board and say, me, everything I do today is for me.

[47:15] And other people who've been changed by the Gospel get up in the morning and they see the grace of God. God has saved me. I'm not my own. I'm bought with a price. He's given me eternal life.

I'm to live for Him. I'm called to a holy call. I'm going to fight sin today. What's on your bulletin board? What motivates you when you leave the locker room to go out on the floor for the game? Or out into your life, wherever it is, school or work or play or your home?

What's motivating you? Paul wants us to be motivated by the Gospel of Christ. May it be so. Let's pray together. Our Father, we thank You that You have shown us grace in Christ even before the world began.

We thank You for Your purpose, for Your intention that did not fail to come to pass, for nothing can turn aside Your hand when You have set to do. None can stop You.

And we thank You that You have done as You promised, as You purposed, that You've saved a people for Yourself, even many gathered here tonight. We thank You for all that You have done for us in Christ, the life that we have in Him that cannot be taken from us.

[48:24] We thank You for these blessings, but we pray that we wouldn't just take the blessings and run and live for ourselves. No, may they change the way we view the world. May they change the way we live.

Help us to live gospel-centered, radically changed lives that has You at the center of everything that we do, every moment of every day. We thank You that we are written on Your hands, that Christ is ever interceding for us, that we are important to You and fathomable as that is, that You are working all things for our good.

We pray that we might be about the business of bringing glory and honor to Your name. Help us then. We are not sufficient for these things. Enable us to live up to the holy calling to which You have called us.

And come and do save more sinners tonight that there might be more on that path that leads to life, living to bring honor and glory to Your name. Do a great work and may You receive all the glory, we pray in Jesus' name.

Amen.