

"Gospel Glue"

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[0 : 00] I want you to know that goals are really important. When you make a goal, it represents a decision to decide for yourself where you would like to be.

You have set your destination, your direction, and you are moving in that way. Goals allow us to evaluate other decisions in light of our goal.

I mean, imagine if you started building a house, but you weren't really sure what you wanted it to look like. And just as you go along, you make up what you want to do.

You don't know when you lay the foundation whether you want a one-floor house or a two-floor, whether it's five bedrooms or two. You know, you'll find at the end that you have a lot more work for a much worse product.

Our goals allow us to plan well and to avoid wasting time and to move clearly in a particular direction.

[1 : 14] When you know where you are going, it changes how you do everything else. It changes how you spend your time, your money. Sometimes it even changes who you hang out with.

And the bigger your goal is, the more it reshapes everything in your life. I remember in high school, I was convicted by Christ's love for me.

And I was trying to work hard to love other people better, even people that I didn't like. And so I was thinking about that as I would go throughout my day and interact with all the people I would come across in school.

And try to be kind and patient to them, even if they had personalities that grated on me. And then I realized that my best friend at the time was not doing the same thing.

He would happily berate and insult people who annoyed him. He would go back and forth with them while I was trying to love them.

[2 : 29] And I realized that because my goal was to be loving to them, I could no longer spend time with him like I did. My goal affected who I spent time with. Well, brothers and sisters, we have a goal.

We have a direction and a destination. We are heading towards glory. We will appear before the face of Christ. And we want to be there.

And we want to be pleasing to our God when we arrive. We want to hear, well done, good and faithful servant. And so that goal, that destination should shape how we live our lives.

And it should shape who we bring along with us as we walk through our lives. Since that is true, we need to stick close to good companions for that trip to glory.

We should look for ourselves to have friends and companions who share the same goal and destination of reaching Christ and being pleasing to him on that final day.

[3 : 46] And so in light of that, we should choose to stick ourselves to other gospel people with some good gospel glue. That's what Paul is trying to do with the Corinthian church in the passage that we're studying today.

I invite you to read along with me 2 Corinthians chapter 5 verses 11 through 13. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men.

But we are well known to God and also I trust are well known in your consciences. For we do not commend ourselves again to you, but give you an opportunity to boast on our behalf.

That you may have an answer for those who boast in appearance and not in heart. For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God. Or if we are in sound mind, it is for you.

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. See, Paul is writing to the church in Corinth. This is a church that he planted.

[5 : 01] He has cared for them. Yet many in this church want to ignore him. They want to disregard him and toss him aside in favor of impressive, flashy teachers.

Who are in reality only concerned for their own good. And not for the good of the church. So Paul seeing their tendency to sway and stray away after bad teachers.

He wants to encourage them to unite themselves with people who will have the same goal, the same destination of reaching Christ, of being pleasing to him.

So he takes this opportunity to show them that they are better off with him because his heart is for the Lord than with these other teachers. Verse 9 and 10, which we studied last week, they remind us that we are to live in light of seeing Christ on the final day.

Let's remind ourselves of what these verses say. 9 and 10. Therefore, we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well-pleasing to him, that is, Christ.

[6 : 20] For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

So Paul launches off of this idea of living in light of seeing Christ. He launches off of this idea into the idea of being close with others who are doing the same.

If we are living in light of seeing Christ, we should also want to live together with other people who have Christ as their goal. He says, knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord.

If we must give an account before God on the final day, that should put a healthy fear in us. We need to be careful.

A cliff edge isn't cruel or vindictive, but even a fool knows to have a healthy fear walking alongside it. This is how we should feel towards God.

[7 : 30] We should have a healthy respect for the fact that one day we will appear before him and give an account for everything we have done. We must have a healthy respect for the creator, our God.

And this is part of what Paul's talking about when he says, knowing the terror of the Lord. Do you feel this way? Do you have a respect for God?

For his power? For his authority? For his holiness? Handle the things of God like you would handle a sharp kitchen knife.

You use it all the time. But you never want to treat it as a toy. It's not something to play around with. You ought to handle the things of God, to be well involved with them.

But you ought never to play around with them. Like a cheap toy. Like something that isn't dangerous. Paul has a healthy fear of the almighty God.

[8 : 37] And that is why he speaks. This is why he has spoken to the Corinthians. He persuades men for the glory of God. He says, knowing therefore the fear of the Lord, we persuade men.

Paul is not a con man spinning golden words over a stinking mess for his own profit. But he persuades men for the sake of the glory of God.

He is an ambassador of the Lord who must give an account. And so he will bring all of his words into line with God and work those words for God's glory.

And he knows that both the Lord and the Corinthians are well aware that this is his heart. He says, but we are well known to God.

And I also trust are well known in your consciences. They know what sort of person he is. That he lives for the glory of the Lord.

[9 : 46] Do you spend time with this sort of people? Do you spend time with people who have a goal of pleasing God? Are you this type of person?

Do others want to spend time with you because you live for Christ? Paul wants the church to stick to himself and to others who are like-minded in gospel focus.

He wants to take that good gospel glue of Christ's salvation and slather it all over them and stick them together and make one people out of them. One people living together, arm in arm, hand in hand for the glory of God.

And we should want the same. I love being with the people of God. It's one of my favorite things to get to do is spend time with other Christians.

I think of a few weeks back when Vicki invited a number of us over her house and we had a great time talking about the Bible, fellowshiping, learning about one another.

[10 : 55] And it was a joy. It was refreshing. The people of God are like clean water when you're thirsty.

I don't know if you've ever done yard work in the middle of summer, but you get hot. You get thirsty. And when you finally get that drink, it is so refreshing.

Well, when we work out in a secular world, it is refreshing when you get to gather with the people of God and find more opportunities than just Sunday to be around them.

And when I am working hard for the kingdom, I want to lift my head up and see other believers doing the same. That encourages me.

It is hard spending a whole day working by yourself, but it makes it a bit easier when you know there's other people working too. We must emphasize time with godly Christians.

[12:00] Like a mother or father emphasizes time with their family. They know that those relationships are important and worthy of investment. We will all stand before Christ and we want people who will stand with us.

And we want people who will walk with us all the way to that final day. This is the type of people we should look to be too.

We want to be good companions for other pilgrims to glory. We want to be good company where we encourage each other, where we instruct each other, and we watch out for each other's footfalls. Brother, I don't think you should do that. I think that might give an opportunity to sin. Sister, I'm worried that you're not in the word enough. And I don't see how you're going to run well without that fuel.

Brother, keep doing what you're doing. It encourages me so much. Sister, I was so thankful when you made a meal for me. We should be these type of people.

[13:17] When we set our heart on God, when his pleasure is our goal, we will be better friends to each other. Let's be a people who would know much of God's word, who work that deep down into us so that we can bless each other with it and encourage each other.

Let us be a people who knows more about God's words than local politics. Let's be a people who uses their words to persuade others, to build them up, to win them to Christ.

So often we use our words for our own advantage. The only time you hear us speak is to talk about ourselves, our favorite things, or to complain. And it's no wonder that when that's the purpose of our words, people don't trust us when we preach Christ to them.

But if people see you preaching, using your words to build them up, and then you preach to them Christ, they believe that you actually care about what's good for them.

And if you don't know how to bless people with your words, I encourage you to find someone who does and watch them and learn from their example.

[14:42] I love the words of Christ, where he shows how these things are pleasing to him. John 13, 35, By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.

And if you don't have love for one another, it's doubtful that you're a disciple of Christ. Let us be good companions working towards that goal.

Following that, Paul more directly calls the church to unity with himself. He says, For we do not commend ourselves again to you.

Paul wants to make clear, when he's talking about his goodness in persuading for Christ and living for God, he is talking about his goodness, not so that people think he's awesome.

He's not bragging. He's doing this so that they will trust him because he is working for God's glory.

[15:45] He shows his Godward heart when he says in verse 11, But I am saying these things to give you an opportunity to boast on our behalf, that you may have an answer for those who boast in appearance and not in heart.

Paul is protecting them. He doesn't want them to be led away after ungodly teachers. Think about a father who wants his children to trust him.

And he says, I work hard for your good. You've seen me care for you. Remember when I told you about this and it protected you from that danger? He's not bragging.

He's making his child trust him because he knows that's good for them. That's what Paul is doing here. And Paul wants them to be so confident of the goodness of gospel people that they refuse any self-important, self-centered teacher.

That they say, you may have nice clothes. You may seem like you have it all together. You might be real confident and have a list of all your great accomplishments.

[17:00] But I know what men who love God act like. I know what it's like to have a good believer as my friend.

And none of your impressive finery is going to make me run after you because I know what good godly people are like. Paul wants them to be able to say that, to boast and say, I know Paul, so I would never run after someone who is using me for their own advantage.

You know, women who have bad fathers often date bad men. And women who have good fathers rarely settle for bad men because they know what good treatment is like and they refuse to settle for something less.

So too Christians who know what godly believers look like rarely settle for the company of people who only claim the name of Christ.

They know what good Christian care looks like and they refuse to settle for anything less. I thank God that that was what I found when I came here.

[18:18] I know there are many churches that claim the name of Christ but could care less about other people. And I was joyful to find in you a family who loves the Lord and loved me.

So thank you for that. I mean, we have all seen what godly men and women are like and we know there's a difference. We see plenty of people who claim the name of Christ but don't live like Christians and they do nothing like what real believers do.

and we ought to boast in the good Christians we know. We ought to be quick to speak about how good it is to be with the people of God.

I'd rather spend my night with a brother in Christ because I know he will care for me and encourage me and move me towards heavenly goals.

I love spending time with brothers and sisters. So don't follow Christians or teachers who only look like they care.

[19:28] They might get real excited. They might be willing to yell and to scream for Christ all the time. But where do you see the care and compassion?

The kindness? The bearing with one another? Do you see those things in their life? There are so many people who talk a big game but we know the difference.

Those who have been loved well know the difference. So make sure too that you are the type of Christian that others can boast about.

That others can say I know so and so and he loves people so well. He is always working for the kingdom. I wouldn't be who I am today if it wasn't for him or for her in the way that she loved me or he loved me.

That's what it looks like to boast in believers. Come to my church. They are loving people. They will welcome you. No one will ignore you.

[20:39] That's what it looks like to boast in believers. believers. I'll tell you my life is impossibly better for the godly men and women who have loved me.

Person after person who has cared for me who has prayed for me who has called me who has read with me and taught me. I would not be fit to preach to you today if it wasn't for their care that has built me up.

I mean believers are like a bed of coals. Spread out we flicker and fade and die.

But all together you bundle them all up and you throw a little bit of the wood of the word on there and suddenly there's flame and heat and light and life.

when believers stick together our heat feeds off of each other and it gets that gospel goodness going. Stick together with the people of God.

[21:46] There's no one like them. They will help you on your way to glory to Christ. Paul continues in this last section for if we are beside ourselves it is for God or if we are of sound mind it is for you.

Now I'll freely admit that this section is a bit unclear to me. I have some ideas about what it means but even after consulting a commentary I'm still unsure of exactly what it's talking about here.

What I am sure about from this verse is that Paul wants the Corinthians to trust him to be close to him because his heart for God makes it so that he will be working good no matter what situation they find them in.

Paul wants them to count on him for the rest of it where I'm a bit unclear on I think that what he's saying is when his life doesn't look great when he is beside himself they can trust that the purpose is for God's glory that if they're tempted to be ashamed of him because he isn't looking victorious and impressive they can be confident that they have no need for shame because he is actually working for the kingdom that that his goal isn't simple earthly success but God's glory which so

often when we are working for God's glory we will be downtrodden and distressed we might not look impressive when I have spent a night with no sleep to try to get through a sermon to write it for a Sunday and you can see the bags under my eyes

I don't look that impressive when Christ was exhausted and in tears praying in Gethsemane he didn't look like a conquering king but he was on his way to win his most important battle so Paul I think what Paul is saying here is when he doesn't look impressive you can trust that it's ultimately for God's glory then I think what he says after that is when he is looking good when he is doing well when he seems persuasive it is for their good we aren't people whose success is for our own benefit any position we have gained is what Paul is saying is here to bring you good when you see us victorious and approved it is not because we're trying to get a bunch of money for ourselves or praise or adoration you can trust that we're not self-aggrandizing but we are working to bring about good for others that any position of good we have will be for the sake of others whatever this verse means it is clear that

[25 : 20] Paul wants them to count on him because his heart for God makes him reliable people whose focus is in this life they cannot be trusted in the same way as people who are living for the kingdom when your goal is in this life sometimes it's going to cause you to push back against the goodness of others I mean we all fall short in many ways even Christians even Christians who are living for Christ so don't expect that believers are never going to make a mistake against you but there's a real difference between people who are following Christ and people who aren't when my goal is peace and happiness and comfort in this life there's a good chance that your benefit might be an obstacle for me that your happiness might stand in the way of my own if my focus is in this life that if you get the job promotion that I want then I miss out on my goals whereas if my goal is pleasing my father in heaven your good will never stand in the way of that blessing you and loving you will never come in the way of the goal of glorifying

God he calls me to love my neighbor as myself that means if I want to please God on that final day I'm going to do an even better job about caring for you so you can trust people whose goal is the pleasure of God because your good is never going to be an obstacle to that they will work for your goodness so stick yourself to the people you can count on the people who are living for the next life people whose godly goals mean your good and people who will will work to bring you blessing and avoid sticking to yourself who are really yourself to people who are really keen in this life people who have great ambitions for what they can accomplish here and now their success their desires will often come at the cost of others and they are dangerous to be wrapped up closely with and this is so often what sin does it poisons and it harms everywhere it goes whereas

God's good ways are life giving for everyone I also encourage you not just to stick yourself to these people but to be these types of people be the type of people that others can rely on be like Christ do not let your heart be taken up with goals and desires that will run roughshod over others but be taken up with his glory James makes this point so much better than I could when he says in James chapter 4 where do wars and fights come from among you do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members you lust and do not have you murder and covet and cannot obtain you fight in war because of these things yet you do not have simply because you do not ask and you ask and do not receive because you ask amiss that you might spend it on your pleasures adulterers and adulteresses do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God whoever wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God reject worldly goals and desires that tear apart and destroy and fill yourself with godly desires this heart of godly desires come from thinking much about heaven and much about that day when you will appear before him and do all these things for the sake of your savior who did all these things for you who did not count his own life too great a price to pay to save you who sought your good because he sought to be pleasing to his father and stick together because Jesus died to make you stick together that was part of his purpose is to make you into a people ephesians 2 19 through 22 now therefore you are no longer strangers and foreigners but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets Jesus Christ being the chief corner stone in whom the whole building being fitted together grows into a holy temple in the Lord in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit when Jesus was dying on that cross his blood was being shed to make you into a people he paid for your sins so that you would form a body of faith to his glory what body can live split in half what body can function with a hand over there and a leg over there a knee over there and a rib up there we're made to live

together bound up in one another with the goal of pleasing our father and jesus was was punished for all of our sins all of our selfish goals that have torn the world apart and he paid his own blood to make us into a people that could fit together having our sins cleansed away with christ as the head every competing desire that destroyed as we sought our own benefit is paid for by his blood when we believe consider to how sweet it has been to be stuck to christ with the gospel glue he has united you with himself and that unity has brought more blessings than any other relationship you've ever known i would rather be a stranger to all than a stranger to him as we close let us remember to live with the goal of pleasing christ when we see him and to stick ourselves to those who are doing the same let us know how good godly christians are are so much better than anything else the world has to offer and let us be so confident of that that we would never be swayed by something less beautiful and let us count on one another and share in all of each other's burdens just as christ so graciously shared in all of our burdens may the lord help us to do all these things and may he graciously forget all the many ways in which we fail let us close with prayer lord god holy heavenly father the savior of our souls knit us together into one people fit for your glory strengthen us cause us to love each other well and to be built on that rock that cornerstone that is our savior it is in his name we pray amen