

1 Peter 4:1-11 "Life With Jesus at the Centre"

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[0 : 0 0] Hi, my name is George Sinclair. I'm the lead pastor of Church of the Messiah. It is wonderful that you would like to check out some of the sermons done by Church of the Messiah, either by myself or some of the others. Listen, just a couple of things. First of all, would you pray for us that we will open God's Word well to His glory and for the good of people like yourself?

The second thing is, if you aren't connected to a church and if you are a Christian, we really, I would really like to encourage you to find a good local church where they believe the Bible, they preach the gospel, and if you have some trouble finding that, send us an email. We will do what we can to help connect you with a good local church wherever you are. And if you're a non-Christian checking us out, we're really, really, really glad you're doing that. Don't hesitate to send us questions. It helps me, actually, to know, as I'm preaching, how to deal with the types of things that you're really struggling with. So God bless.

Just bow our heads in prayer for a moment. Father, we come to listen to your Word, and Father, you know that we don't always acknowledge before you that your Word troubles us a bit if we pay attention to it, and we sort of grumble about it, although maybe not out loud. And all we do is grumble, don't inquire. So Father, we ask that your Holy Spirit would help us to notice your Word and to dig deep into it. And we thank you, Father, that you are a good Father in Heaven, that you love us, that Jesus died on the cross for us to save us, that your Holy Spirit is a Spirit that leads us into you as you live in us. And so, Father, lead us and guide us into all truth. Help us to trust your Word. And we ask this in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen. Please be seated.

Amen. Please be seated. Parts of the Bible we find sort of awkward and offensive. And one of the things I found as I've been a Christian longer, and especially as I'm, in a sense, forced to think about the Bible text because I'm going to preach on it, or I'm going to teach on it in another type of context, is over time, with very few exceptions. And some of the exceptions are just really weird, like cultural things that you need to give the cultural context to. But the parts of the Bible that offend us, or bother us, or make us embarrassed, are actually probably the Bible texts that we need to listen to the most, because they have the most to teach us in our particular situation. It shows that, in a sense, the spirit of the world and how the world thinks has been greatly influencing us. And so we really need to, in a sense, rather than, as you heard in a prayer, rather than just sort of grumble with it or skip over it, but actually dig deep into it and try to figure out what it is that he's saying, why it is, in fact, a really good word.

You might not have listened to it or noticed it. If you're like me, you're sort of the Bible. You hear the Bible, and you listen, but you don't really listen. But there's a part of that text, and we're going to look at it, that, well, I don't know how many of you have heard the conversion story of Christopher Yuan.

[3 : 3 8] He's written a couple of books. And obviously, there's a lot to it. Part of his whole conversion story, you know, where he went to a, you know, a very, very, very, very chaotic gay lifestyle. Big drug dealer in the, I think it was in the Boston area, gets arrested and all of that. And he had a praying mom and everything.

But his conversion story actually begins when he finds a Bible in the garbage. And for some reason, he actually feels that he should read it. And that's actually the sort of the start of his conversion.

Anyway, imagine if you could, that maybe one of your neighbors has been cleaning out the attic or something of their grandmother or their great-grandmother, and they come across an old Bible, and they happen to just pick it up and open it and read something.

And then they maybe come to you, because here you go to church, and they say, look at this, look at what it says about people like me. Do you really think I'm as bad as all that? And we'd probably have one of those deer-in-a-headlight moments.

We're not really sure what exactly to say to it. So we're going to look at that. And so it's 1 Peter 4, and we're going to be looking at verses 1 to 11. And if you have a Bible with you, and I encourage you to bring your own Bible when you can, it's just helpful to be able to look at it and make your own notes, etc.

[4 : 50] 1 Peter 4, verses 1 to 11, and let's start reading it. And just before we start reading it, just to remember... Well, actually, here, we'll read it, and then I'll make the comments.

So 1 Peter 4, verses 1 to 11, and it begins like this. Since, therefore, Christ, that's Jesus, suffered in the flesh.... Just sort of pause here.

It's sort of an unfortunate translation, flesh. It's very literal and correct. But really what we should think of here is body or physical, that he physically suffered, that he suffered in his body.

Okay? So since, therefore, Christ suffered physically in his body, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking. For whoever has suffered in the body, physically in the body, has ceased from sin, so as to live for the rest of the time in his body, physically, no longer for human passions, but for the will of God.

Now, obviously, there's a couple of odd things in there. It makes you think of monks whipping themselves or wearing hair shirts, and I'll get to that in a moment.

[6 : 03] But the first thing about this to notice, as I've said time and time again before, Peter was one of Jesus' first disciples, one of his closest disciples.

He knows that Jesus died on the cross. He didn't see Jesus dying on the cross because he had denied Jesus, and he went away in despair.

But he definitely knows that Jesus died on the cross. He knows that he was buried. He knows that on the third day the grave was empty. He saw the empty tomb, and he met the risen Jesus. And within a couple of years of writing this, Peter is going to die, and he's going to die a gruesome death, and he could have avoided that gruesome death if he just said, time out, fooled ya, it didn't really happen.

He could have avoided his painful death. And he could have even done that and then gone on and said, I fooled you, you really did die. No, no, Peter would die for this. So here's the first thing.

When he says arm yourselves with the same way of thinking, there's something profoundly different about rooting yourself in something which is historically true than merely rooting yourself in a story.

[7 : 19] You know, you could adapt the story of Santa Claus or the story of the great pumpkin or the Easter bunny or, you know, not even that. If you took some of the great myths of the Oedipus myth or anything like that, you can play around with them.

You can negotiate with them. You can, you know, balance them with other types of things. But there's something very, very angular and immovable about basing yourself on something which actually happened.

And that's what's very significant here, is that Peter is saying, listen, think about who Jesus was. Think about what he taught. Think about the suffering that he underwent.

Think about his death upon the cross. Think about his burial and his resurrection. And think about these things. These are the things that you need to think about, you need to remember, and that they should form how you see the world, how you understand yourself, how you get your identity, how you get value, how you see things that are going on, the things that you're going to do or not do.

Root all of these things in the true story, the true story of what really happened to Jesus in reality. That's how you base your life, not just on stories, but on this thing, this particular story which is true.

[8 : 33] And it's, you know, like, you know, one of the things there's, some of us have maybe been troubled over the years by, and if you're from outside the Christian faith, you don't know that, there's a whole group of people who call themselves Christians called health and wealth gospel people, that, you know, Christians are meant to only be wealthy and only be healthy and always to triumph and everything like that.

And it can sound very appealing and it can be very convincing that the big problem with it is they're not thinking about Jesus who suffered and died on a cross, didn't hit his 40th birthday.

There has to be something wrong about all that teaching. You've got to think about Jesus. So that's what he's saying, you know, first and foremost. And Peter's going to bear witness to this by his death.

So think on this, think through this, and buy this. But now what on earth does he mean when he says, for verse one again, for whoever has suffered in the body physically has ceased from sin so as to live the rest of the time in his body physically, no longer for human passions but for the will of God.

So this is an example of hyperbole. He's really saying something far simpler and something which we all recognize as true, that every time you resist a temptation to do something which is wrong, you're thinking about Jesus, thinking about what he did, thinking about the fact that it's not just a story about in the past but that Jesus is with you and that as you think about that and it gives you the power and the ability to not do something which is wrong where you know that you should do something that's right and rather than avoiding doing the right thing because it'll maybe cost you, you actually do the right thing, that every time you do that in a very tiny way, you snip the power of rebellion against God in your life and every time you don't do that but give in to it, you strengthen it.

[10 : 27] Just a very, very simple thing. Years ago, there's this man in the congregation, Tom, he was very, very blunt, plain spoken.

I mean, when he heard that I was having a ninth child, he asked me if I knew what birth control was, like he's that type of guy, very, very blunt, okay? And one day I was just, we were having lunch and I just mentioned that something had happened and I apologized to my wife and he said, I would never apologize to my wife for that and I just had one of those Holy Spirit moments and I said to him, that's why you're divorced twice and don't have anybody living with you now.

And because he was that type of blunt speaker, he looked like he was going to be mad. He said, ah, you're right. So, you know, so here's the thing. You know, if I, when I wrong Louise and I do wrong Louise, if I don't apologize, but instead, when confronted, I just say, no, no, I was right to say that.

If that happens all the time, I'm building habits and a type of personality or character that's going to make that more and more common. But when I apologize, it's creating a type of tender heart within me that I'm going to notice when I've sinned and I can apologize.

It's a very, very small way. You can do it the same thing with porn, with power, with generosity, all those other things. It's a very, very common truth. You're given a choice between living out of these passions and passions here mean something exorbitant and wrong.

[11 : 57] So your passion for money, your passion for selfishness, your passion for pride, your passion, you know, for sex outside of merit, like all of those things. If you either give into those things and they get stronger or because you're thinking about Christ and remembering Christ and you're realizing these things are wrong and you say no to them, you're building strength in that other direction.

So that's all very simple, basic moral teaching and something, by the way, that a psychologist or something would say, yeah, yeah, that makes sense. You're either strengthening something or weakening something, right? It's very, very, just good common sense.

But now we get to the very awkward and difficult part that once again, if one of our friends or co-workers found their grandmother's Bible and happened to open it up and read it, they'd say to you, do you, is this how you guys think about me?

Is this how Christians think about guys like me or gals like me? And not only that, they'd not only think that, they'd think, like, you can think that, but I'm a better person than you are.

And if you think differently, you're just full of fill in the blank. Well, here, listen to what they say. It's verses 3 and 4 of chapter 4. For the time that has passed suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do.

[13 : 11] Now just sort of pause. I'm going to make the text harder, not easier. But it's meant to be hard, not easy. For Gentile here, substitute the word anybody who's not a follower of Christ.

That's what it means in this context. So anybody who is not a follower of Christ. So in the times past, you could live the way people who don't follow Christ want to do.

Living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties.

There really means drinking parts, the type of thing like panda game or something like that afterwards, where you have drinking and carousing that goes on into the night and involves also probably the destruction of property and everything like that and lawless idolatry.

Okay, all people outside of Christ, that's what they want to do? Whoa, I never noticed that in the Bible before, eh? With respect to this, they are surprised when you, Christian, do not join them in the same flood of debauchery and they malign you.

[14 : 30] Now you can see why a friend who's maybe a very, very, very, very passionate advocate for the poor, somebody who's just living a really, really, really good life and they read this and they say, really, that's how you think people who aren't Christians that you're like, that we're like?

And frankly, a lot of us would be uncomfortable now that we notice it because one of the things, and if you're watching this or if you're here and you're not a follower of Christ, it's a very common thing actually for Christians to be troubled by the fact that many of their non-Christian neighbors, their neighbors who don't follow Jesus, are better than they are and it's a source of trouble in terms of how they think about themselves.

So this can be a bit of a troubling verse. So what's going on in this particular verse? Well, there's a couple of things. First of all, actually people, it is actually sort of a very common Canadian view.

I'm not going to talk about other cultures, but it actually is a bit of a common Canadian view. Just think about it for a second. If you told your neighbors, let's say you're a 25-year-old man or a 25-year-old woman, and if you told your neighbors that you'd never had sex outside of marriage, would they think more of you or less of you?

They'd think less of you. If you're a 25-year-old young woman and you're dating a fellow and he wants you to sleep with him after the second or third or fourth date and you say no because you're not going to sleep with him until you're married, will he say, oh, that's very admirable?

[16 : 15] Or will he say, boy, you're a weird freak. You'll never be married. You're condemned to a terrible life of singleness and unhappiness.

If you were a 28, 29-year-old man or woman and you told people that you've actually never done drugs once in your entire life and you've never been drunk, will they say, wow, that's a manly man and a womanly woman?

What a model. I wish I was like you. No, they'll think there's something wrong with you. Isn't that true? So actually, first of all, there is something in here, isn't there? But the second thing is this.

In fact, if you study, if you, first of all, like certain types of depth psychology would say that if you just scratch beneath the veneer of somebody like me, and I'm, by the way, not a moral exemplar, but if you scratch beneath the veneer of somebody who says they're a devout Christian, you're going to see very dark passions.

And there's a whole school of scholarship that when they study something like the Victorians who are very concerned about living proper types of lives and being good citizens and having good marriages, and there's an entire academic whole world that says that is always looking at their letters and their diaries and trying to convince people, and often correctly, that if you just scratch beneath the civilized veneer and their self-righteousness and their self-justification, what you see is actually something very dark and very, very, just something very dark and chaotic, very different from their public persona.

[17 : 52] But finally, the real thing about, in other words, what they're saying is if you scratch beneath things, what you see is what 1 Peter 4 verses 3 and 4 are saying.

And then, but finally, the real proof, and this is very important, I'm taking some time on it because it's really important for it, and it's also important, it's important, you see, one of the problems we have with the Bible is the Bible is so deeply realistic about real human life that we turn away from it.

But one of the things which is so beautiful about the Bible is it's so profoundly realistic in helping us to understand who we are, yet at the same time, not to lead us into despair, but to lead us to Christ and to give us hope.

So how do we know that actually non-Christians agree with this, people outside the Christian faith agree with this, disaster movies. Not just disaster movies, but end-of-the-world movies.

So what happens in every end-of-the-world movie? It doesn't matter if it's something like the zombie apocalypse is overwhelming all of the institutions in society, so the veneer of civilization is scraped away, and you see what people are really like.

[19 : 03] Maybe it's an alien invasion, and the aliens are triumphing, and you see what most people are like when the veneer of civilization is scraped away. Maybe it's some type of virus outbreak which is killing 99% of the population, and you see what human beings are really like, and what do you see in all those movies?

Raping, murdering, pillaging, drunkenness. All of them. Dark passions unleashed.

Nobody's going to arrest me. Nobody's going to punish me. So let's get drunk. Let's rape. Let's steal. Let's destroy property.

That's what every disaster movie says. In fact, if you saw a disaster movie, and as the zombie hordes are overwhelming society, and all they showed was the people not being infected by the zombies, was gathering in communities where they loved each other and cared for each other, and they nursed the sick, and they gave of their possessions to help each other, you would turn to your neighbor watching and saying, this must be a dream sequence.

It has to be a dream sequence. And in fact, if the whole movie ended like that, what would the movie reviewers say? Boring and unrealistic. And it would be a box office flop.

[20 : 31] Why? You scratch beneath the veneer of human beings and you get 1 Peter 4, verse 3. It gets worse.

Why do we like movies like that? Well, there's a very simple reason why we like movies like that. When we're watching World War Z, we don't say, yeah, I'd like that to happen.

I'd like an opportunity to rape and get drunk and pillage. Like, nobody says that. If they did, you'd go, we'd think under our breath, psychopath.

We wouldn't want to have anything to do with somebody who says, yeah, I really love, I love those parts. I love those rapists and murderers. No. We all think we're Brad Pitt and I apologize, I don't know how to pronounce her name, Muriel Enos.

That's who we think we are. What are we saying? I'm saying, all of you guys would be getting drunk and raping. Louise and me are going to be the heroes.

[21 : 40] You're watching the movie thinking, George and everybody else are raping and pillaging and we're going to be the hero. In other words, those movies show your self-righteousness. It shows that you believe 1 Peter 4, verse 3, but you think you're different, you think you're self-righteous.

Whoa. Many people would say, I didn't see that coming. But then a very common human response to that would be say, George, that's a really bleak way of understanding human beings.

That's so bleak, why on earth would Jesus die if that's true? And then we can say, now you're understanding the beauty of the gospel. All my self-righteousness combined with my dark passions and Jesus saw them all and still he died for me.

Still he died for you. Now you begin to see the wonder and the beauty of the gospel. Just one final point before we move on, just to bring this home.

Imagine for a moment that, we'll use me as an example, God just says, I'm going to take the last 10 years of everything that George thought and everything that he imagined and everything he daydreamed about and it's going to be completely unfiltered and it's going to be shown on that screen.

[23 : 18] I wouldn't want to be anywhere near this room. I'd probably try to take enough money to go hide in some obscure part of Alaska or Wyoming in the wilderness and hope that nobody would change my name and hope that nobody would ever find me.

And friend, that would be your response too if it was your own life. Why? Because 1 Peter 4, 3 is true. And now you can start to understand why it's so remarkable that Jesus would die for you, that he would see that.

He knows what went on in your mind and mine and still he loved you enough to die on the cross for you. And can't you see how any idea of your own self-righteousness or self-justification is like being stoned on drugs that has no connection to the real you.

You need a savior. You need a savior. And I have wonderful news for you. There is a savior. And he died for you.

Now what does this last little bit mean it sounds about praying to the dead? We're going to get to the application in a moment. But just the verse 5 and 6, it seems this weird thing about preaching the gospel to dead people.

[24 : 43] Look at what happens next. But it really is just, it's bringing home the wonder of the gospel. Verse 5, but they will give account to him. In other words, people who are maligning you.

Just remember I said, what would they say to a 25-year-old man who's never slept out, who's waiting for marriage and hasn't slept around or doesn't watch porn, they wouldn't believe you and they'd think there was something lacking in you.

So they malign you. But they will give, verse 5 says, but they who malign you will give an account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. Jesus will come again.

Idi Amin died without having to face judgment for what he did, but he has not escaped God's judgment. Stalin died without having to give an account for killing 50 million people, but he has not escaped God's judgment.

That's what it's saying. No one escapes God's judgment. Verse 6, for that is, this is why the gospel is preached even to those who are dead, that though judged in the body, physically, the way people are, they might live in the spirit the way God does.

[25 : 58] And what this is really meaning is this. There's a fellow who was a minister in Ottawa for quite a few years named John Pierce. And after he was forced to retire, he went to Nova Scotia, to rural Nova Scotia to minister.

And after he was forced to retire there, he went, I've told you about him before, he went into the middle of nowhere in New Brunswick where there's just very poor people and uneducated people and nobody wants to go there.

And he ministered there up until about 10 days before he died. So he was healthy for his whole life. He died, I think, at 88 or 89 and he lived a complete life dedicated to being with the lowly and the poor and the unimportant, the lower working class.

He was spectacularly generous. His financial advisor kept warning him that he would run out of money and he would die a complete pauper. And people could say, looking at John, like, what a waste.

And he just died like everybody else. He did all that sacrifice, but he just died like everybody else. And that's where Peter wants to remind you, no, no, no, no, no.

[27 : 10] The gospel is always worth it even if it changes your life completely. And people can't make the judgment that your life was a waste because all will appear before God.

And God will say to John, John, gosh, way to go with a smile. We all appear before God.

Death is not the final word about us. Death is not a judgment on all human life and endeavor. The final word about human life and endeavor is made by the triune God, by Jesus, the same one who redeemed you is the one who will judge.

So we need a Savior. How should we live in light of this? Well, you know, I could write down some points, but actually, Peter gives you how shall we then live?

And it's better if you just hear what he has to say than me giving you my lame points. So let's look. How do we live? If Jesus really did live, he really did die on a cross, he really was buried, he really did rise from the dead and the grave is empty, that changes everything.

[28 : 22] And if there really is going to be a return of Jesus and a judging of the living and the dead, that changes everything. And if these things are rock solid true and they should be how we think and how we should understand the world, how do we live?

Well, Peter gives you some ideas. He gives you some suggestions. Look at it, verses 7 through 11. That's the end of our text today. This is the application. How shall we live? Look at verse 7. The end of all things is at hand.

That's what he's saying. Just remember the end. Therefore, be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers. Now, by the way, when I was setting this list this week, two things were very eye-opening and one thing was very humbling to me.

I don't know what it's going to be for you, but for me, two things were very eye-opening and one thing was profoundly humbling. And this first thing, this application, that if you are basing your life on Jesus and the reality of the judgment and what God wants you to do, what he's going to form in you, what you need to ask him to form in you, as you see it being formed in you, you want to have it develop, you want to have it grow, you want to encourage your brothers and sisters in Christ to grow in this, to go high-five, way to go when you can see it developing and when you see them not doing it to pray for them is that you're praying that people would be sober-minded, sort of that they would be self-controlled and that they would be sober-minded and a better translation is clear-minded.

And by the way, most Canadians would like to be, have self-control and most people would like to have clear minds. In fact, a way to insult another person in Canada would be to say they lack self-control or they don't have a clear mind and they'd be offended.

[30 : 05] These are things that we want. But here's the thing, if you look at the verse again, this is the important application. This was the thing that sort of shocked me. The end of all things is at hand, therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers.

And they're both connected. The whole point of being self-control, having self-control is for prayer. The whole reason to be clear-minded is for prayer.

Now let's be honest. Many of us think if we were to develop real self-control, I don't need to pray as much because I got self-control.

I got to pray because I'm losing my self-control and I've caused chaos in my life and I really need God to come and rescue me. I lack self-control with my wife. I lack self-control with my boss.

I'm in trouble. God help me and rescue me. And we sort of think that if we had self-control, we need less prayer. Same as if we were more clear-minded, we would need less prayer. But what this text is saying to you is if you have self-control without prayer, it's not self-control.

[31 : 10] If you are clear-minded without prayer, it's actually not clear-mindedness. I mean, that's... For me, I was like... I'm just... This is just for me.

I thought, wow. Like... I guess I've just never noticed it in the Bible before. But, you know, if you think about it for a second, if I was really clear-minded, I know that I don't know the future.

My culture and my ego thinks I know the future, but I don't know the future. I have no idea. None of us know whether each one of us will be alive in 24 hours. Like, not a single one does.

And being clear-minded and having self-control means that we can pray with self-control and we can pray clear-minded and we're acknowledging that God is sovereign, that we need his help and we need his guidance and we need his wisdom and we need to act in terms of how he starts to respond to us as we pray.

So, what's another application? That's verse 8 and 9. Above all, keep loving one another earnestly. Another way to translate the word earnestly is constantly.

[32 : 19] Since love covers a multitude of sins and show hospitality to one another without grumbling. So, these are another two things. As we think about Christ, as we think about his life, as we think about the last judgment, one of the things that Christ is going to want to do within us as we think about this is that we live a life which is more and more loving and that we become more and more hospitable.

And that's one of the things, once again, that we can be praying for us as a church, we can be praying for each other. If you're in our small group or the women's group or when we get the men's group off the ground in a couple of months, that as a person can share, you know, I really struggle with hospitality and I think I'm starting finally to get a little bit less frightened and less sort of needing my private space to show more hospitality and we give high fives.

Way to go. You celebrate that because that's where the Holy Spirit's going to move you into. And then this next, this is verse 10 and 11.

This is the part that really humbled me. I don't know about how the word of God is working in your life. God works differently in each life, but here's what he says, verse 10 and 11, more application.

As each has received a gift, now what it means here is that God gives spiritual gifts and natural gifts. Okay? So a spiritual gift might be, a natural gift might be the gift of the gap.

[33 : 44] A spiritual gift might be to, to be able to speak in such a way with the Bible that people understand the Bible better and their lives better, right? So there's, they're natural and spiritual gifts.

As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God's very grace. So it's God's gift. It gives different gifts to different people.

And then Peter divides all of the gifts into, in a sense, mouth gifts and hands and feet gifts. So whoever speaks is one who speaks the oracles of God.

In other words, your speaking is always controlled by God's word. And whoever serves is one who serves by the strength that God supplies. Now those are good things, really worth memorizing and meditating upon, really praying that God would help us to understand what natural gifts, by the way, like some people are just very naturally hospitable.

Well, use it to the glory of God. Some people are just naturally better at loving people. You know, we'll use that to go visit the sick or to minister to shut-ins.

[34 : 53] It's just a bit of a natural thing. Other people, there's more spiritual things that come in. And we need all of these gifts to be exercised for people to flourish. But here's the next thing, and this is the part that was hard for me.

I'll read verse 11 again. Whoever speaks is one who speaks oracles of God. And whoever serves is one who serves by the strength that God supplies, excuse me, in order, in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ.

To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. So the point of all of this is that in everything God is glorified through Jesus Christ. Christ, and that in fact all glory belongs to him and all dominion belongs to him as it has been in the past, is now, and ever will be in the future.

And here's the part as I was meditating upon this text this week that the Holy Spirit spoke to me and convicted me. Thought experiment came to me. Imagine, and this is the, somebody was praying for me because it just came to me like a bit of a confrontation of me from God.

George, imagine that God shows up and says to you, I'm going to make you a deal. You have a choice, one of two things. I'm willing to bless you and work through you in such a way that this church gets five times bigger.

[36 : 24] You're used to plant 20 churches, lots of missionary come from your church, a ministry to the poor is started, you have, the church has a profound effect on people's lives as they're completely transformed, people who are very, very far from God are completely transformed, and this will be something that I will do, but nobody will think you had anything to do with it, and you will get absolutely no credit.

Would you do it? Now, I'll be honest, I'd at least like a footnote. I'd at least like a watch or some type of way to go.

Like, I realize that I'd like some little tiny bit of credit, but really, God is going to work in my heart to this point.

Shannon's stepping down from the Sunday school position. I'm going to announce it. I've sort of announced it right now, and maybe the next Sunday school person, if God was to come to them and say, we're going to send 200 kids to the church, you're going to have a Sunday school that ends up being the talk of all of North America, and nobody will remember that you had anything to do with it.

Will you do that? And that's a hard thing. And it might be for some other types of things. Maybe God will bless you in business with spectacular generosity, or God will bless you in some other way with profound wisdom, but it'd be one of those things, gosh, there's these really wise sayings, but I can't remember who said it, but it was you, and nobody ever remembers it to you.

[38 : 12] Would you do it? Would you take it? That's the challenge here. That's how God is going to work in our lives, but the fact of the matter is, brothers and sisters, there is a weight of wanting to justify yourself which crushes us, which crushes me, which crushes you.

We are so much lighter and freer to lose that, to know that it all comes from God.

As I've said before, just pray that it's actually really existentially true in my life. I am nothing more than a mirror when I preach, and I'll tell you, my mirror is cracked, it's missing a few pieces, part of it's faded, and part of it's warped, and all I can do is angle myself to the light that comes from God so that my mirror will be filled and shine into your lives, and I contribute nothing.

And pray that that would really be true, that how I understand myself and understand my ministry. That's the humbling part of this.

See, once again, I want some of the, that's why I need a Savior. That's why you need a Savior. Good news, there is a Savior.

[39 : 33] And He's for you. He's for you. He's for you. Let's stand and bow our heads and pray.

Let's stand and pray in closing. Father, we give you thanks and praise that you know us really perfectly, and yet you look at us with perfect love.

And we give you thanks and praise that you were very clear-eyed about each one of us. And Jesus, that you were clear-eyed about each one of us when you died on the cross for us.

And we give you thanks and praise that you were a wonderful Savior, a beautiful Savior, a deep Savior. We give you thanks and praise that knowing your knowledge of us and your death for us, that we can pour out our hearts in prayer to you.

We can confess even the darkest things about our lives to you, and you won't be offended, and you won't be caught by surprise, and you won't say, oh, if I knew that about you in advance, I wouldn't even want to talk to you.

[40 : 45] That, Father, grip us with this and grip us with these truths of who Jesus is and what he did for us on the cross and the miracles he performed and the teaching he gave. And, Father, bring these truths home to our lives that this would be how we think and how we understand the world, and that we would always remember that Christ is coming again and that all human beings will be judged and that our only hope in that judgment is Christ.

I have no hope. We have no hope apart from it. And, Father, we ask then that you make Jesus real to our lives. And for those, Father, who may be listening and they feel a pressure, they've not given their lives to Christ, Father, may your Holy Spirit help them to say, Jesus, be my Savior.

we ask all these things in the name of Jesus, Father, your Son, and our Savior. And all God's people said, Amen.