

Our Priorities

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- [0 : 0 0] You're listening to the sermon podcast of Grace Reformed Church in Spring Hill, Tennessee. To learn more about us, visit our website at gracereformed.org.
- And now, today's sermon. Turn with me to Colossians chapter 3. For those of you that are visiting, we normally work through books of the Bible.
- We just finished 1 Peter. We're going to be jumping into 2 Peter soon. In between books, we typically do a series. So we'll be starting that next week. But for today, I wanted to provide a little bit of an update.
- And I need to tell you a story. This is just special to me. This guitar that you see sitting up here, I bought when I was 16 years old. It was one of the first things I purchased when I got a job.
- And I used to play it on Sunday mornings next to my sister. And so for those of you who don't know, my daughter is 16. And she's now playing this guitar next to my son. And so I made it through without crying, but I wanted to really bad.
- [1 : 0 2] It was a special moment for me. This week, the elders, we got away Thursday evening all the way through Saturday morning. And spent time, the entire time, it's the biggest agenda we've ever had.
- It was very aggressive. I think we went to bed both nights at 11, exhausted. I spent most of my day in bed yesterday trying to recover from the weekend. We call it an elder retreat.
- I don't know how much retreating we did. We should probably call it an elder advance because that's more of what we did. But we pretty much look at every area of ministry.
- And we walk through every person's name. And we think about how to love and care for you. And we think about the future of our church. And we've had a couple of changes that are going to be coming your way.
- We always try to find ways that we can improve loving you and caring for you. And so we'll be presenting some of those changes. Nothing big. I think you'll appreciate them. And then we also spent a long time discussing what it will be like going into this new facility.
- [2 : 1 1] We would pretty much not fit. If all of you were here right now in that other building, we would not fit in there at this moment. So we're going to have to figure that out. I know this is a larger Sunday in that we have baptisms.
- So we're just working through all the details for that. So just continue to pray for the elders. We're going to be working with many of the ministry leads, those who lead ministries and departments, to get your insight and help in preparing us for that move.
- One of the areas that the elders always do is we think through the priorities of our church. What are we focusing on? Where are we going? To make sure that we don't fall into what you could just, you end up just dealing with what's in front of you.
- You're always reactive instead of proactive. We're always just dealing with problems but never thinking about where is it we're actually going. So it's important as a congregation that we remember who we are and what we are and where we are going.

So this morning I wanted to provide three priorities that the elders discussed and that we want to remind all of us and comfort us with this morning. So these are, I'm going to do my best to get through all three of these before our baptism and bringing of the new members on.

- [3 : 26] So these are the three priorities. First one is not going to be a shock to anyone but it needs to be up front because it is the ultimate and supreme priority of our congregation. And it is the priority of the gospel. It is the priority of the gospel.

So if you're with me in Colossians chapter 3 and we're going to read verses 1 through 4, I want you to hear how Paul emphasizes post-salvation, post-resurrection, those who have been brought into faith.

I want you to hear how he emphasizes what we are now pursuing, what we seek first. And he says this, Colossians chapter 3 and verse 1. If you've then been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.

Set your minds on things that are above, not on the things that are on the earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. What a wonderful picture. I think first Peter did an amazing job of emphasizing the way Peter wrote it this way.

- [4 : 36] He says, set your hope fully on the grace that is to come. Well, where is the picture of our grace, the author of our grace, the giver of our grace?

Where is he right now? He's in the heavens, right? He's sitting on his throne. So our hearts and our minds and our hope is not in the world. This is why he says, do not set your mind on the things of the world.

But he says, to set your hope, your mind on that which is to come. And this is the embodiment of the gospel. This is the good news that Jesus Christ does all of the work. Sometimes we only preach what I would call a quarter gospel.

We don't finish the completion of the gospel. We always talk about the forgiveness of sins. But we also must talk about not only the forgiveness of sins, but the promises that are coming to us.

Mainly that which is to come. He says that we have inherited all of the blessings of Jesus. This is important. So it's not only that our sins is a good reformed, good old historic word.

- [5 : 37] Our sins were imputed. They were transferred and put upon Jesus. And when he died on the cross, he received the wrath of God on our behalf, the forgiveness of our sins. We always emphasize that part of the gospel.

But the second part of the gospel that we learn is that all of the obedience, all that Jesus did and received the Father's blessing. This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.

That phrase, in whom I am well pleased, is now put on you. And when the Father looks down upon you, sister and brother, he says, of whom I am well pleased.

This is a part of the gospel. And the third part of the gospel is that he says, not only have I transferred debt and not only have I transferred righteousness, but now I live inside you.

I will cause you to walk in my ways. I will comfort you. And you have endless communion with me through prayer. This is all part of the gospel. And so I think Paul does a good job encapsulating that when we're thinking about Christ and where he is.

- [6 : 40] He's in authority. He's sitting there. It's a finished work. We're waiting for him to return. And when he does return, this is the last part of the gospel, when he appears, we will be like him in glory.

I grew up in traditions where when we think about the gospel, we think about it as elementary. It's the entry point.

It's for sinners. It's for the unbeliever. And so we will preach the gospel to the lost or we'll try to sure it up into the weak Christian. Some might even call it this way.

The gospel is the milk of the word. Turn to be to Romans chapter one. And I want you to read how Paul does not describe it this way. It is true.

We need to be constantly preaching the gospel to the lost and to those around us. But Paul opens his letter to the Romans and to that church.

[7 : 36] Notice what he says. This is Romans chapter one. We're going to be all over the place. So get your fingers ready. Romans chapter one and verse 15. He says, so I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.

Who's the letter to? The Roman city? Nope. It's the church at Rome. And he's not wanting to come there and preach the gospel to them because he doesn't think they're saved.

He believes that they are. And he goes on to say, verse 16. For I am not ashamed of the gospel. For it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

So there's the first part of the gospel. It is for salvation. But then the second part of the gospel. For in it, the righteousness of God is revealed from faith, forth faith.

As it is written, the righteous shall live by faith. This is part of the gospel. The righteous shall live by faith. Church, there are many. Over the years, the seven year history of our church are going into our seventh year.

[8 : 50] Or we finished our seventh year. I'm good at theology. I'm horrible at math. We're in seven or eight years. Something like that. Does it really matter? I don't think it does, right? But over the years, we've had people leave because they don't appreciate the priority of the preaching of the gospel.

I met someone recently, a couple weeks ago. And I asked them why they were here. And they said, because you preach the gospel every week. This is true. And this is an emphasis that cannot change.

Because as we continue to read scripture, you will see that the emphasis for the believer is a constant increase in awareness of the power. Did you guys catch this? It is the power of God.

You don't realize there's nothing else in all of scripture that is contained. It says it contains God's power. If I told you there was a box, and if you make the box or purchase the box, inside of it, every time you open it, you will experience the power of God.

Does it matter how expensive that box is? You're like, I will sell my life. I will sell everything I own. I want the box. Right? This is true. This is an illustration that Jesus gives. This is true.

[9 : 57] He says there was a man walking in a field, and he found what? A precious treasure. And he went and sold all that he had so he could buy the field. Why? Because he wanted the treasure. And he says, this is the kingdom of God. And how is it that one enters into the kingdom of God?

It's the gospel. So, when we're thinking about the most precious power we could ever have, it has to be the gospel.

And if we're not emphasizing it in all of life, in every area of life, every day of our life, then we are going out from underneath the power of the gospel. And we're now going into the power of the flesh or the wisdom of men.

This is why he says in verse 17, the righteous shall live by faith. It is natural for the fallen human mind to want to live by the power of our capacity, our self, our flesh.

We want to be in control. We want to be able to walk by our strength, not by faith. We even miss the definition of faith. Faith is to put your trust in a power outside of yourself.

[11 : 02] At times I listen to people and I hear them describe their Christianity and they have faith in their faithfulness. I know that I am saved and God is blessing me because I have been faithful.

Do you know what is dangerous about your faithfulness? It's as strong as you can keep it. And I think it's interesting how both Peter and Paul say stand in the strength of the Lord if you're going to fight against the enemy that is coming your way.

We don't want to emphasize our faithfulness, but yet it is necessary. Your faithfulness to the king and your faithfulness in the work of the kingdom is important.

But your faithfulness is always in what power? We don't walk by faithfulness. We walk by faith. This is why we wrote the book on rest.

We find our rest in the sufficiency and power of Christ. And from that position as we sit in the power of Jesus, we then walk. But if you do not rest in Christ's power and you don't walk by faith, the righteous will then live by their faithfulness and they will find themselves outside of the power of Christ.

[12 : 13] Therefore, at our church, with God's power and strength, we will continue to prioritize the gospel in all of the areas of our life.

Paul is very clear in both Colossians, as we said in Romans, that we walk trusting, relying on the sufficiency of Jesus and never our own power.

And this is what leads us to our second priority. Because we see the gospel to be the priority of our preaching and teaching at our church, we see that the scripture also teaches us that the priority then of our church is the means of grace.

That's point two. The priority of the means of grace. When we think about means, think about access. Think about receiving, a substance, a meal.

We have been given from our God simple means. Ordinary is another way of rephrasing this as a simple means.

[13 : 19] We aren't required to climb a mountain or build a temple. We are required to hear a word that's already been given. So these are ordinary, simple means.

Please turn with me to 1 Corinthians chapter 6. We spoke on this a couple of weeks ago. And the elders have agreed that we're going to do some writing with Patrick, who is the pastor of Covenant Grace down in Columbia.

We're going to put together an explanation. What do we mean by the means of grace so that those who are new coming into our context understand the priority we place on these means? Historically, I will list them for you, but then we'll walk through them.

The historic Reformed faith and Christianity has always believed that God strengthens, comforts, and convicts, and unifies the church. So if you want to ask yourself, how do I become more like Jesus?

How do I grow in my faith? How do I become full of the knowledge of Jesus so that the fruit of Christ is flowing out of me? How does this happen? And the Bible, the Reformed Bible, whatever.

[14 : 21] I'm excited. I'll calm down. The Bible, interpreted by the Reformed, have said it's God's means of grace. The preaching and teaching of his word. The week in and week out gathered church where we hear it.

This is why we must proclaim Christ, because he is the one who is strengthening our faith. Prayer is an ordinary means of grace that God uses to strengthen our faith. The fellowship and the burden bearing of the believers, where we gather together to encourage, but also to care for one another.

And then the spiritual nourishment that is seen through the table and baptism. We get to experience all of this today, by the way. The gathering of the saints, the singing and prayer, preaching, teaching, baptism in the table.

Lord, come today. It's a good day. Maybe just me. Maybe just me. So this is why every single week you will hear us emphasize what Christ is doing through the church and guaranteeing us in the church that we have our strength.

So look at 1 Corinthians 1, verse 17. This would be underneath the ordinary means of preaching and teaching. 1 Corinthians 1, verse 17.

[15 : 34] Paul says, For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel. Now in context, this is people were claiming authority and special connection to God because they had been baptized by somebody.

So Paul's creating some clarity here. If you're saying I've been baptized, Paul, you missed it. So that's the context. For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel.

And not with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power. For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved, it is what?

It is the power of God. So if I get up here and I give you very wise and elegant words and my stories are intriguing, and at the end of it you go, wait a minute.

Did he ever preach us the power of the cross? Did he ever give us Jesus? Then all of my words of elegance and all the big language I used and all of my stories were for nothing.

[16 : 39] And Paul is convicting the church in Corinth to simplify their faith and go back and say, God's power is in God's preached word.

And we need to clearly and precisely preach the gospel. We also learned that prayer is the means that God uses where we, because I'm very tempted to do a series on prayer.

I did it a couple of years ago. I think I want the elders to talk about doing it again. And prayer is the greatest act of dependence that we have. Because if you think about it, you're admitting you can't do something.

And you need a power source outside yourself. It's the greatest act of dependence. And then you start going, so what do I not need to depend on God for? I can't think of anything.

Even if I'm trying to love somebody, I need him to encourage me and strengthen me and remind me of the gospel. In our service, we believe in prayer so much that we put it six times throughout our service.

[17 : 41] We do a prayer of where we're first welcoming our God into where we are being welcomed into his presence after the reading of the psalm. We do a prayer of praise. We do a prayer of confession.

We pray for the sermon. We pray after the sermon. We want there to be a constant reminder that we are engaging and we are receiving from our God. So prayer is a means of grace.

And what is wonderful about prayer is that we can take it with us. It is one of the means that we are encouraged to daily trust in our God in conversation. The fellowship and the bearing of one another's burdens.

We have emphasized this so much. But I think Ephesians, if you just want to go read Ephesians 4 and go read Galatians 6.1, you will see that you cannot get away with the promises that as we gather together, we become one in Christ and that one creates hope, strength, and unity.

And then turn with me, if you're already in 1 Corinthians 1, turn to chapter 10. And then we have, through the years, continued to emphasize the nourishing spiritual factor of both the table and baptism.

[18 : 51] Most of us probably have come from a tradition where it's remembering only. We just remember what Christ has done. But this is not how the Bible describes the table and even baptism.

We aren't just sitting there reminding ourselves of what Jesus did. Paul says it very specifically. There is a spiritual presence. There is something spiritual that is happening that is, that God's engaging in our heart and our soul.

What is he doing? Look at verse 10, sorry, chapter 10, verse 16. So 1 Corinthians 10, 16. The cup of blessings that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ?

The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? That word participation means all of the blessings.

Everything that comes out as the result of Christ on the cross. He says every time we engage in the bread and the wine, that we are receiving once again those spiritual blessings.

[19 : 57] And this is something that was fought for during the Reformation, I'm thankful that it was, to reclaim it. Because what was lost was the table became a work. You would go to the table to assure your salvation.

The Roman Catholic Church demanded it as a sacrament, one of the seven sacraments, that you could not have assurance. You could not know for sure if you missed the sacrament. There are other religions in this area that were not quite sure if I were to die and not have communion, if I would make it to my king.

Again, we are told here that this is not the means of our salvation, but it is the means of the strength of our faith.

And so we prioritize it. We don't want to miss the table. We don't want to take it once a quarter or once a month. We want to take it every week. Because it is pointing our hearts and our minds away from.

By the way, most churches will use language like this. Examine yourself to see if you're ready to come to the table. And I understand what they mean. And Paul talks about this because the church was taking it in a very sinful way.

[21 : 00] And so he says, you need to examine your heart because you're not approaching the table appropriately. But when the call to the table, do you know what it is? It's a call to engage the gospel. The remembrance of what Christ has done.

Dear person here, male and female, women and children. Then you have sinned all week long. Tell me a day you loved God with everything you had.

And you loved your neighbor better than yourself. Tell me one day. You didn't even do it this morning. This is why we come to the table to be reminded we do not walk in our own strength.

We are participating. We are receiving the blessings of our king who did it for us. The reason why, if you're prioritizing the gospel, because it is the power of God.

Every time, I want you to think about this for a moment. Every time you come to church and the preaching of the gospel is given to you, God's power is entering in your ears and refreshing your soul.

[22 : 07] That is a guaranteed promise. If you're not participating in that, there is no promise that God's power is coming into your ears and your heart and your soul. This is also the promise of the means of grace.

It says this in Ephesians chapter 4. When the church functions properly, Christ, through the means of the Spirit in each one of us, through the gifts of the Spirit, it says he builds us up. Into love. This would mean, if you're not participating in it, that you are not being guaranteed to receive these benefits.

This is why the writer of Hebrews is so starkly harsh and says, Do not forsake the assembling of yourselves as such as you are doing. What they were doing is, they didn't see Christ and his benefits necessary connected to the body, and so they were disconnecting themselves, randomly showing up if they so wanted to.

But there was no commitment to the means of grace because they didn't see the power there. They were going back to the law, and they were trusting in their own obedience and their own discipline and their own righteousness.

The gospel and the means of grace are the constant reminder you have no strength. You have none whatsoever. If this is true, then it changes your priorities.

[23 : 19] Think about this. Is there anything more important than your soul? Is there anything more important than your spiritual health? There's nothing more important than your spiritual health. Therefore, our priorities change.

You can always tell what the priority of a person is. It's evidenced in what they value. And what we value captures our time and our energy and our money. And so it's good and healthy to examine, have I placed other things?

Is my future, physically, and my health or my entertainment, my job, my wealth, more important than the means of grace? Because we're going to place them in a priority that is less.

Therefore, entertainment, work, hobbies easily get replaced by the means of grace. And this is what really leads us and prepares us for the third priority. Which is the kingdom of God, the priority of the kingdom.

What I have realized over the last few years is that we often want to fix our lives and then take church and kingdom seriously. You guys have all done this, right? You invite somebody to church, you're like, oh man, I'm so bad.

[24 : 34] But once I get some, like, if I show up to church, he'll kill me. I know he will. How many of you have heard that one, right? I need to just get my life in order. And, you know, there are so many passages that just make that clean.

That's like when the prodigal son was on his way back. It's like, you know, he had a plan to clean himself up. What did the father do to the plan? He kept his mouth shut. He said, don't even, please, don't insult me with your plan.

That's not walking by faith or by grace, is it? That's walking by our own strength. This is exactly where Satan wants to keep us. He wants to keep us content with where we are.

Well, I'm not in prison, but I'm sure I'm also, you know, I'm not able to serve. And I know that I don't show up to church all the time. And I don't even know what it means to be a part of the kingdom. But once I kind of get my life in order, we'll prioritize those things.

This is what it means to be enslaved. The I will one day. As I was talking with the elders this week, and many of you have had these conversations with me, what I have realized in my own life, my own priorities, and as I talked with many of you and the elders, is that we think about prioritizing the means of grace, but we don't necessarily have a reason to do it.

[25 : 55] We have to be motivated by something. If we just want to be motivated to be good for the sake of being good, I'm bad at heart. I still live in a sinful body. I like to do bad things because they feel good.

And I'm selfish. If you've been around me long enough to know, you know I'm very selfish. And when sin gets in my heart, I can be extremely selfish. Judith, stop nodding your head.

I have to have something bigger and more significant and more important than me to live a godly life and dedicate my life to this church and to the gospel.

And this is what it is. It's his kingdom. This is why Jesus tells the disciples, seek first the kingdom of God, which is very hard for us to understand. You don't know why?

Because we have an anemic, weak view of God, his work, and his kingdom. So let's talk about the priority, the last priority that we have, which is the kingdom of God. What does it mean to seek first the kingdom of God?

[26 : 56] Because if you understand the purpose of the kingdom, then you will value the ordinary means of grace and you're going to value the priority of the gospel. We don't understand this command from scripture because we don't understand Christ's kingdom.

Turn with me to chapter 17 of Luke really quick. We just have two more passages we're going to look at this morning. I'm going much quicker than I thought I would. This is good news.

Luke chapter 17. Jesus is teaching it towards the end of his life. He's teaching them about the kingdom of God.

And the Pharisees are very upset because they're expecting there to be a reinstitution of a powerful nation underneath God. They've kept the temple in line.

They understand that there's a Messiah that's coming and he will bring back the glory of Israel. And Jesus isn't talking the way they want him to talk. And not only that, he is recruiting people out from underneath their teaching.

[27 : 56] And they don't like that either. A divided kingdom cannot conquer. And it feels like Jesus is dividing the kingdom, creating disciples that are weak. They don't have swords in their hands.

They're not excited about fighting against Rome. This is Luke 17.20. In other words, it's already here.

Because it dwells inside of you. That is what makes seeking first the kingdom of God the hardest aspect of our life is that it's a spiritual pursuit.

We pursue it based upon what we know to be true of Christ. This is why Paul has to say, I'm not ashamed of the gospel. Because the gospel is the good news. Believing is something you cannot see or prove.

Do you guys, if you have an unbeliever that's a neighbor at work, you want to freak them out, just tell them. So I believe that one God named Yahweh created the entire world.

[29 : 13] There's nothing more powerful than him. He's never not existed. And the greatest joy I have is he lives inside you. Just watch them go, oh my word, I forgot I have the crock pot on.

I gotta go. Paul's like, I'm not ashamed of that. I'm not ashamed to believe that my God and king died for me, rose again, is sitting on the throne, and yet his spirit lives inside me.

I'm not ashamed of this. And that there's nothing in this world that I will take with me. There's nothing in this world that's of value. There's nothing I can place above my king and his kingdom.

Therefore, Jesus is like, your entire existence from this moment forward, when your eyes are opened, and you can see the truth from the light of the dark. He says, that is what drives you for the rest of your life.

When Jesus rose from the grave, he spent 40 days on the earth. And he spent 40 days, and this is the first chapter of Acts, in verse 7. And it says he spent 40 days reminding the disciples of the kingdom.

[30 : 20] Three years to teach them, one day to mess it up, because they all abandoned him, and 40 days to set it straight. That's because we don't live looking for physical relief.

We're in a season right now, when it comes down to politics, that we all want to put our faith and trust in the means and the power of a nation or a person. We are to pray for them.

We are to want what's best for them. As it says in Daniel, we are actually going to do that which will help the United States, help Babylon succeed. But our hope is not in this world. Our hope is in a king that's far outside of it.

This is why the spiritual nature of our faith has been lost. Satan wants us to emphasize the physical. I want to feel good. I want to be safe. I want to have a good time. And a country that is free and a country that is successful financially and is in line with my morals.

That's what I am seeking. No, we're not. But listen, I want what is best for every single human in this country. And I will do what I can for them. Because I don't want to see anyone suffer.

[31 : 28] But the greatest hope I have is not which present candidate is going to bring the best blessings. It's very clear here that we are thinking about the advancement of Christ in the hearts of people around the world.

We are not thinking about the advancement of our country. The greatest nation to ever exist, Rome. The greatest city to ever exist, Babylon.

And God goes, out of existence. We do not put our faith, and it's easy to do. Most of us were born and raised here. And those of you that weren't born here come from a country of chaos.

And you appreciate what we have here. But in the end, you also see its frailties and its cracks. There is no nation that is safe. So this priority of the kingdom, the priority must be that it is a spiritual kingdom.

So this leads us to the kingdom call. Turn with me to 2 Timothy chapter 2. This is where if you can understand what you're doing in the kingdom, you'll realize very quickly the preaching of the gospel and the church is the greatest power source and hope that you have.

[32 : 43] You won't need to be guilted and shamed into it. You will willingly embrace it. Because what else do you have? I think it's interesting. I wanted to spend a whole sermon on this, but I'm not going to.

It says that Jesus died for the church. Some people say, well, I have a relationship with God, but yeah, I'm not about the church. It's like, well, he said he died for it.

And that's kind of offensive to say that you're not going to prioritize the very thing he died for. So what is the call of our king?

What's the kingdom call? Well, it's first is that we live as kingdom citizens, not as earthly citizens. This is why in Peter, he describes us as being what?

Sojourners. Ambassadors. You know what an ambassador is? It's one who's from another country living in a foreign country as a representative of the country they're from. So we do not live our lives embracing this world because we're not of this world.

[33 : 47] We're of another world. And so it's being other-minded. Listen to how Paul describes us to Timothy, this young pastor. He's trying to teach them how to think kingdom-minded. This is 2 Timothy 2 and verse 3.

Share in suffering as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. Man, the amount of times we are warned that you're going, if you fight this kingdom war, you're going to suffer. Look at verse 4.

No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuit since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him. Entangled would mean you're being drawn down by it.

This is how Hebrews describes it, right? Setting aside the weight. What does weight do? It entangles us as we're trying to run. Setting aside the weight and the sin that easily besets us. If we're thinking about what we're doing for the king, we're not going to be worried about what's going on in the earth.

That doesn't mean we are disconnected. We don't vote. We don't participate in mercy ministries. Right now, Steve Cobb is working hard to help our church learn how to get into the culture to show the mercy of Christ to people.

[34 : 55] We want to show mercy so that our light of the king could come to them. We don't just want to feed people for the sake of feeding them. We want to feed them so we can lead them to Christ. And so this leads us to the last part about our prioritizing of the king or the kingdom.

It's the kingdom war. We have spent so much time in Peter. I'm not going to do it here. How many passages warn us about the dangers we face when it comes to being attacked by the evil forces of Satan?

I challenge you. We did this at Men's Group. Philemon was the only book we came up with. Name me a book, a letter written to the church that doesn't mention the attacks that we face from the evil one.

You can't. This is how typically the Bible is, when you read a letter, these men who are trying to encourage the churches, this is how it goes. They will start with, this is who you are in Christ.

Stand firm there. This is how it applies to the church. Now unite together in Christ. And number three, this is what will cause you to divide the attacks of the evil one. You'll notice that almost every letter is set up this way.

[36 : 13] But what we don't believe, and we've been unfortunately numb to this, we don't see that there's an actual problem. This last part over here, yeah, well, I understand that in theory.

And because we only understand it in theory, we do not take it serious, and therefore we find ourselves intoxicated, and we find ourselves not doing the work of the kingdom because we're under its attack.

This, I don't know if I've made a conversation with Eric or Ben or Curtis, I can't remember. This weekend, we were, I might have been all together. We talked a lot. My voice is tired. I think, we were rethinking the phrase from Peter when he says, seeking whom he may devour.

What does it mean to be devoured by Satan? He's using a prey predator language. When you watch the prey, the ones that end up becoming consumed are the ones who, what?

Wander from the pack. There's power in the pack. There's protection in the pack. But the one who is weak, frail, or doesn't pay attention, when they wander, what happens?

[37 : 32] They are pronounced. This is exactly the illustration that is being given. It's that when we remove ourselves out from underneath God's power and protection, the preaching of the gospel, the ordinary means of grace, for the sake of advancing into an evil kingdom, an evil visible kingdom that is backed by an invisible force.

And you wander off from that. Peter is saying, you are putting yourself in place of being devoured. And I do not believe that Satan can steal our salvation, but I do believe he can get us entangled into sin so much so that we are a damage to ourselves and we are a damage to other people.

And many of you have seen this in the lives of people around you. And it starts with little steps of wandering. The warning passages are here because they are real.

I think it's interesting in Ephesians 6 when he says, you're going to be shot at, and if you want to stand against these shots that are coming your way, you have to stand in the strength of the Lord.

Now, you know how we always apply that? Me at home, you know, staying focused, memorizing and quoting scripture. He's not writing to you as an individual. You know who he's writing to? He's writing to the church. Because the chapter before, he just says, when the church functions properly, it becomes a powerhouse of love.

[38 : 54] It becomes a strength. And if you stand in that strength, which is in Christ, then you can withstand. So the reason we are anemic, let me put it to you this way.

When was the last time we saw someone come to Christ that was not a part of our church? They were not believers, and they came to Christ because we took and advanced the gospel to them.

And they heard it. And then they were discipled by us, and they became baptized. It's because at times we become complacent with where we're at. John, give me some good food. You know, help me love Jesus.

But don't get in the way of my mission, of my entertainment, and my job, and my family. I'll take care of that. And Christ is over here saying, he's king, he's lord, he decides.

It's for your good. It's for your total enjoyment. And when you decide to serve Christ your king, you will not wake up the next day and go, why did I do that? I totally regret it. You will wake up and realize there's nothing more valuable than Christ in the kingdom.

[39 : 56] I think as a church, what I realized, if we want to prioritize the gospel, and we want to prioritize the church in an ordinary means of grace, we need to see the reality of the kingdom. Your marriage and your children will be influenced when both spouses are understanding, we're going to seek first the kingdom of God.

Because otherwise, you can't agree. I've never met a couple that agree on how the house should work. It's never happened. Whoever's dominant is the one that ends up, that's how the house is going. And it just causes chaos and fighting.

But when Christ and his kingdom becomes what priority, then there is no argument because Christ sets the tone. He sets the priority. He sets the joy. And so my encouragement to all of us, as we think about the future of our congregation, we think about our family together as we continue to grow, we want to bring people into this congregation, helping them understand the priority is the gospel, the ordinary means of grace, and the kingdom.

And anything outside of that might be important, but it's not our priority. Let's pray. Father, I'm so thankful for not having to come up here and convince them with words that are eloquent, that the power is not in me and my mind and my flesh, but the power is in the true message of the gospel.

May this means of grace comfort all of our souls today. May we use it to bring our love and compassion towards those who are lost outside of the kingdom, that they may enjoy you as their king.

[41 : 29] We are here to celebrate four precious souls who will be receiving this wonderful gift of baptism as they put on their priestly robes, as they walk out of the water as ambassadors to be proclaiming the wonders of the kingdom to the world.

In Christ's name, amen. Thanks for listening to the sermon podcast of Grace Reformed Church in Spring Hill, Tennessee, where everyone is in equal need of grace.

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