

Give Honor Where Honor is Due

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Preacher: Pastor Rob Green

[0 : 00] It's a privilege this morning to have Dr. Rob Green who is Pastor Saul's son and Peggy's son.! That is an actual fact.

Late breaking but we are thankful for the blessing of having Rob with us. For some we have watched him grow up and minister in many different ways both here and other places.

Rob preached at Pastor Saul's ordination and very appropriately this morning as well. Well thank you for the opportunity to give me to speak this morning.

In a stroke of irony today is not only my dad's official retirement but it's also his birthday. So for those of you who hadn't realized that today is his birthday. And it truly is my joy and privilege to be here.

Not only to celebrate this day with my parents but also as a former member of this church. As Pastor Kenroyer mentioned my family actually moved here in 1985 and I joined in 1987.

[1 : 24] And was here until 1997 when Stephanie and I moved off to go to seminary. Now speaking of seminary I have to admit that they didn't teach me exactly how to do retirement messages.

Baptize a person? Yep. Solemnize a wedding? Yep. Speak at a funeral? Yep. And those skills are important. I mean after all people do not appreciate if you get them confused.

It's also true that if you don't handle those appropriately then you end up on America's Funniest Home Videos. And so those skills certainly are important but a retirement message not exactly.

And so as I began to think about this particular day I found it difficult to find just the right passage. I considered 2 Timothy 4-7 which says I have competed well, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

The picture is of course a runner crossing the finish line and heading for the prize. It is a beautiful picture of a person's life who has lived well for Christ.

[2 : 28] But you know that this passage was penned when Paul was on death row. It was to our knowledge the last of his writings. And so if I preached that passage it would sound like my dad is about ready for death rather than retirement.

No, it's certainly true that my dad is going to slow down his pace probably. He's had a job since he was 14 years old. But it's not true that retirement is going to mean playing shuffleboard, reminiscing about the days when men were men, or discussing how he walked barefoot to school uphill both ways.

Right, nor is it going to mean sitting idle waiting for the curse of death to finally take its course. His retirement will be an active one. He will still be involved in many of the same ways in which he is involved today.

At the very same time he is going to allow the church to hire another man whom God will use to move the ministry forward. And so, quite frankly, 2 Timothy 4, 7 just didn't quite cut it.

Then I considered the end of Romans 13, which says, Give to honor the person to whom honor is due. Or a similar passage, and certainly there would be something appropriate for that.

[3 : 43] There are certainly times and places for those kinds of messages. They are in the Bible, of course. However, I chose not to do that purely for selfish reasons. You see, I did not want my dad to fuss at me for the next 20 years telling me how I messed up his retirement message because I focused too much on him.

So, I'll let Pastor Kenoyer do that and let my dad fuss at him. So, that left me in a bit of a pickle. What text could I use this morning to acknowledge the work of God and, at the same time, to encourage all of you this morning?

And with that in mind, I would like to invite you in your Bibles to Philippians 1, verse 1. Philippians 1, verse 1.

I'll be reading out of the New American Standard. As you remember, Philippians is a book that was written during Paul's time when he was imprisoned in Rome.

It meant that he had been under a house arrest type environment for a period roughly of four to five years at this point. And the church in Philippi had recently sent him a gift.

[4 : 57] And Paul was writing back thanking them for that particular gift. Now, let me pick up the text beginning in verse 1. Paul and Timothy, bondservants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons, grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all, in view of your participation in the gospel from the first day until now.

For I am confident of this very thing, that he who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus. For it is only right for me to feel this way about you all, because I have you in my heart, since both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel you are all partakers of grace with me.

For God is my witness, how I long for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ, having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God.

Now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel, so that my imprisonment in the cause of Christ has become well known throughout the whole Praetorian Garden to everyone else, and that most of the brethren, trusting in the Lord because of my imprisonment, have far more courage to speak the word of God without fear.

[6 : 35] Some, to be sure, are preaching Christ even from envy and strife, but some also from goodwill. The latter do it out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel.

The former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition rather than from pure motives, thinking to cause me distress in my imprisonment. What then? Only in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed, And in this I will rejoice. Yes, and I will rejoice.

For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayers and the provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ according to my earnest expectation and hope, that I will not be put to shame in anything, but that with all boldness Christ will even now, as always, be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death.

For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. But if I am to live on in the flesh, that will mean fruitful labor for me. And I do not know which to choose. But I am hard pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and to be with Christ, for that is very much better.

Yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake. Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you for the progress and joy in the faith, so that your proud confidence in me may abound in Christ Jesus through my coming to you again.

[7 : 57] Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I will hear that you are standing firm in one spirit with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel.

In no way alarmed by your opponents, which is the sign of destruction for them, but of salvation for you, and that too from God. For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in him, but to suffer for his sake, experiencing the same conflict which you saw in me, and now here to be in me.

I would like to suggest that in this passage we are going to find four very clear, proper responses that we should have to the retirement of a faithful pastor.

Now this text is a little bit longer than I would normally handle, but there are some wonderful ideas here that are important for every one of us. So here's number one. And in the bulletin is the set of notes for all of you if you want to follow along.

First proper response. Praise God for his regular and ongoing work in the lives of people. Paul's occasion for writing and for giving thanks and for praising was simply that the church had given a gift to him.

[9 : 10] That he had sent some provision for him. And in this he writes back and he says, praise God for you. In fact, whenever I think of you, here's what I think. All joy. All joy.

I'm excited. I am praiseworthy. I am so thankful to God for what he has done in your life. Our occasion this morning is that my dad is officially leaving the workforce after 52 years.

The last 15 as a pastor in this church. And in both cases, the proper resultant action is a prayer of thanksgiving. Thank you, Lord, for what you have done in my dad's life that has resulted in fruitful ministry over the last 15 years.

Thank you, Lord, for what you have done in my mom's life as a faithful companion to my dad for the last 45 years. This passage provides us, in fact, some very clear expressions of where that thanks should reside.

Thanks to the Lord for his work in my parents' life. It was a work that according to verse 5, as Paul reflects on the church, he says, here's what resulted.

[10 : 19] When God worked, it resulted in you participating in the gospel. Well, that's exactly what happened with my dad, too. You know, when Paul visited the church, he did so about 10 years prior to the writing of the book of Philippians.

On his second missionary journey. And he did what he often did. And that was he would go search, find some people who had some knowledge of Judaism, and then go win them to Christ. Explain to them how the Messiah, the long-awaited Messiah that you were waiting for.

Oh, by the way, he's here and his name is Jesus. And you need to repent and to trust in the death, bro, and resurrection of Jesus Christ for your salvation. Now, 10 years later, the church has been active.

Paul is imprisoned. And he's writing back and he's thanking God for the reality that that labor was not in vain. That when they came to Christ, it resulted in a new attitude, a new action.

It resulted in something different. And that was a participation in the gospel from the first day all the way till that point. My dad came to Christ in 1975.

[11 : 25] And so this year represents his 40th birthday, so to speak, of his conversion. And I think it's worth a couple of minutes to explain God's work in his life that has resulted in participation in the gospel.

One of the watershed moments was when our family moved to this side of town. And in October 1985, we started attending Maranatha, who was led at that time by Bruce Schneider.

We were part of a small church plan and had been for many years prior to that. And my dad was faithful to that and we were faithful to it. But growth was quite frankly a little bit hard to come by.

And so for the first time in our lives, we were under the clear teaching of scripture. And dad began to grow like a weed. Pastor Kenoyer came shortly after that.

And the work that God was doing in my parents' life continued to produce fruit. I can still remember. Huge, three-ring binders full of my dad's daily devotions.

[12 : 31] And that was very unusual. Because when I was a boy, mom would be the one who was normally reading her Bible. Mom was the one who was normally talking about the Bible.

It became obvious that God was doing something in dad's life. I remember his commitment to continuing to grow as he was exposed to more and more truth.

In the fall of 1987, my junior year, my dad decides that our family needs to attend Sunday school. I wasn't exactly all that excited about that.

I went to Hilliard High School back when there was only one of them. And most of the kids went to school here. And so I, quite frankly, was about as welcome as a snake at a frog convention.

But my dad was exercising spiritual leadership. And whether we liked it or not, we had to recognize that God was doing a work in him.

[13 : 30] I remember when he was elected as a deacon. And he took that role seriously. It was not just a title to hold, a status symbol, or a location of honor.

It was a calling. It was a calling to gospel-centered ministry. It was a calling that impacted Saturday morning deacons meetings. It was a calling that impacted church attendance.

It was a calling that impacted what he did in the evening. And the more time he spent doing gospel-centered ministry, the less and less time he wanted to invest in other things.

Which is why he pursued seminary training. Which is why he pursued counseling training. Which is why he started meeting guys at 6.30 in the morning. And if you knew my dad prior to this point in time, you'd know that's insane.

That is absolutely taking the God's work in his life for real. I mean, my dad did not know 6.30 existed on the clock other than in theory prior to these moments.

[14 : 33] And so here he was getting up at 6.30 to invest in gospel-centered ministry. That was a picture of the work of God. And we should praise him for that.

We should praise him. We should praise. That's exactly how Paul reflected on the church. And as he thought of those 10 years, he said, Man, praise God for your work and your life that has resulted in gospel-centered ministry from this point forward.

Well, that's happening with my dad, too. And for that, we should praise God. I'm not going to elaborate on all of these stories. But let me just say there were a few things that I tried to change in my dad growing up.

And not only did he refuse those efforts, he wasn't really happy about the fact that I was even trying. But when God brought about conviction, God worked in my dad's heart, things changed and never went back.

Friends, that's how God changes people. And when you take a minute to reflect on the Lord's work in my dad's life, I hope it causes you to rejoice, to praise, to thank God for choosing to work in his life so that his life was now invested in gospel-centered ministry.

[15 : 47] You know, there's a couple things I really should mention about my mom here, too. Because as this was going along, mom was getting a different husband. And even if there were some things for the better, it was still different.

He was changing careers. He had a nice career as an engineer. And now he was spending all of the money on, like, seminary and, like, books.

Well, many of you know that I lead the counseling ministry at Faith. And let me tell you, women are not always happy about the wonderful choices that their husbands make to love Jesus more.

And mom embraces that, is excited about that, wants that, encourages that. My mom had to live with the fact that my dad knew a lot of things that she couldn't know, simply because of his position.

And that can feel a bit uncomfortable. And yet she trusted dad implicitly. You know, you do not have to be married to do ministry well.

[16 : 53] But if you're going to be married, you have to marry well to do ministry well. And dad certainly did. And so thank God for his work in my parents' life.

Well, the text continued, not only in verse 5 where it says, In other words, it's a work that continues until the day of Christ.

Letter B. This is a hopeful promise for the future. And I fully expect dad to use his remaining years to get serious gospel ministry done.

And here's why. Because I am confident that God promises to work all the way until the day of Christ. It's not like today is the day that God shuts off his work.

Oh, you're retired. It's now time for you to sit back, relax, and be merry. Forget that. It's time to just do a new stage of work. Right? It's a new stage of how it is that God is going to continue to work in me in order to produce God-honoring fruit.

[18 : 03] So I don't expect dad's fruitful years to end. His gospel-centered ministry years are not over. Because God promises that he is going to work all the way until the day of Christ.

Not just to now. It is also a work, a reason to praise God, that binds the family of Christ together. Notice verse 7.

For it is only right for me to feel this way about you all, because I have you in my heart, since both in my imprisonment and the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you are partakers of grace with me. For God is my witness, how I long for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus.

I love how Paul describes the relationship that he has to the church. It's a very personal note that shows how much he really cares about them. He has them in his heart, he says.

They stood with him during difficult times. He longs for them with the affection of Jesus Christ. Here is another work of God. My dad's heart is bound to yours.

[19 : 06] My parents love Maranatha. This is the place where God has worked. And it is obvious by their desire to stay here. And to continue to bear a harvest among you, because they have an affection for you.

You have been there in the days of challenge as well as in days of blessing. And these experiences have bound you together. Now for those of you who only have known my dad for the last 20 years, you don't understand the significance of God's work in that.

So let me explain it just a little. My dad is fiercely and always has been fiercely loyal to my mom. Even before he was a Christian.

Even before he was saved, he was fiercely loyal to mom. My dad was loyal to my sister and me. Notice I took out the word fiercely. He was fiercely loyal to mom.

He was loyal to my sister and I. One little vignette about that is apparently there was a point in time where I was trying to kind of like squeeze in there and get dad to myself.

[20 : 16] And he kind of picked up on that. And I'll never forget the conversation we had. He said, Rob, and I quote, If you make me choose between your mother and you, then you will always lose.

Well then. All right. I guess I understand where the priorities are. There's mom and then there's us. And then here was the next priority.

Everybody else. It was mom, my sister and I, and everybody else could take a hike. That was the way it was. And to hear him talk now about Maranatha is nothing short of the work of God.

And it's something to praise God for. You see, the first proper response to a day like today is to offer praise. Praise for God's work that resulted in gospel-centered participation and ministry.

Praise God that his work results all the way until the day and continues to the day of Christ. Praise God that his work results in binding your hearts together.

[21 : 28] Now, here's the second response. Verse 9 to 11. Pray that your love might grow so you can decide what is best.

See, after Paul praises the Lord for the work in the church, he turns now to a prayer request. The logic of this section is so delightful.

And I wish I had like all afternoon to unpack this, but I don't. So I'm just going to give you the short version. And the short version is, notice what it results in. The praise and glory of God. And those of you who have been around Maranatha like forever, remember that this was one of our annual theme songs.

Right? You guys remember that? I could actually still sing it. I'm not going to, but I could. Here's what happens. He says, here's the prayer request.

He says, first of all, I'm going to praise God. I'm going to give thanks. And then I'm going to pray that your love is characterized by knowledge and discernment. And this I pray, verse 9 says, that your love may abound still more and more.

[22 : 33] It will grow, continue to grow in real knowledge and discernment. You see, the beginning point of his prayer is that the love granted by God would be the kind of love that is characterized by knowledge and discernment.

So many people think of love as a feeling. It's that warm, fuzzy feeling that you get when someone walks in the room, when your heart goes pitter-patter. But here's what the scripture says. This kind of love is the love that we need when we look at a situation that we can properly assess it and then choose the proper course of action.

Let me illustrate that. Let's pretend you have a married couple and one of them, let's just pretend for argument's sake, the girl is not being very lovable. I realize that you just have never had that happen.

And so we're just going to go with it for argument's sake. But here's what happens. She's just not being very lovable at that particular moment. So what is the husband going to do? You see, the kind of love that is prayed for right here is the kind of love where the husband takes a step back and he thinks maybe one of the reasons she's not being very lovable right now is because she's had to deal with some really hard things.

And instead of move in with harshness and instead of move in with confrontation, he decides to move in with grace, with mercy, and with compassion.

[23 : 58] Instead of being confronting and being tempted to just say, well, you know what, she just needs an attitude adjustment right now. Instead, he decides that the pathway to that confrontation is not aggressive confrontation, but instead mercy, grace, compassion, and leaving room for the work of God to bring about conviction.

You see, that's the kind of love that is based on knowledge and discernment. Not just a warm, fuzzy feeling. It's the kind of love that is able to look at circumstances and decide what is best about them.

That's what verse 10 says. When you have this kind of love, you may approve the things that are excellent. That is, you can determine what is best.

Now, I'll just tell you, I have no interest in living my life thinking solely about what I'm doing. Thinking solely about what is right and what is wrong. I want to live my life in the world of deciding what is good versus what is best.

And the only way that I can do that is if my heart is full of love and is characterized by knowledge and discernment. You know, that's true for my dad. And it's true for you.

[25 : 13] And I am sure that my dad will enjoy a little slower pace. I know that freeing a salary for the church will put you in a wonderful position because you get his service and you get another pastor.

That's a two for one deal in my book. But I know this. He is going to need, you are going to need, love characterized by knowledge and discernment in order to do productive, gospel-centered ministry in his retirement.

That's what it's going to take. And you're going to need the kind of love that is built on knowledge and discernment not to waste the productive years of your life either. Where you're stuck merely between the right and the wrong instead of moving to the good and the best.

Many of you know, I'll just give you some practical illustrations of this. Many of you know I am a graduate of Ohio State. My blood, sweat, tears, as well as my parents' money were given to Ohio State.

And I am, to this day, a loyal fan. I live 15 minutes from Purdue University. But I'm still a loyal fan. And so when the national championship game was on, we had a party at our house.

[26 : 20] We invited all our friends. But one of the lessons I had to learn was this. There are some things a whole lot more important than that. Saturdays used to be given to football.

Now they're given to a lot of things. Why? Because I needed love characterized by knowledge and discernment. So that I could approve the things that are not simply okay, but the things that are excellent.

I carry a fairly heavy ministry load at faith. And one person once told me I have three jobs all wrapped into one. I think that's an exaggeration. But I do carry a load.

But some of that is my fault. I am not assigned everything I do. Some of it I volunteer to do. And I volunteer because I understand that every waking moment needs to be focused on accomplishing something for Christ.

Maybe it's preparing a message. Maybe it's teaching. Maybe it's counseling. Maybe it's teaching counseling. Maybe it's spending time with the family. Maybe it's having special time with Stephanie. Maybe it's playing games with folks from our adult Bible fellowships.

[27 : 24] I recognize that I am much more tempted to sin when I am idle than when I have a plan. But I'm only going to do this. I'm only going to invest like this if my heart is full of love characterized by knowledge and discernment.

Now what about you? Let me make a few suggestions. Some of you guys aren't really loving your wife like you should. And you aren't because your love is not characterized by the right thing.

It's not characterized by this love associated with knowledge and discernment. And instead it's wait, wait, what's in this for me? What's in it for me? What's in it for me? What's in it for me?

Love that results that Paul is praying for. He says here's what the church is to be having. This is the kind of love we as a church body need to have. Is knowledge and discernment.

Parents, are you loving your children like you should? Are they loved based on knowledge and discernment? Are you looking for ways to use every square inch of this beautiful property?

[28 : 32] I was walking around earlier this morning. And just thinking, oh my goodness. I wonder what we could do. Just walk around the yard. Now wouldn't it be amazing if every square inch of the grass was used for gospel centered ministry?

What if every square inch of every piece under roof was used for gospel centered ministry? Not just one day a week. Seven days a week.

Thinking about what could we possibly do? There's an amazing kitchen. Talk about the towel. Right? The kitchen? I mean it's sweet. So how can you use the kitchen?

To get gospel centered ministry done? As often as possible. As regularly as possible. Now some of you might say, but Rob, that's a ton of work. It's a ton of time.

That may mean that I have to use part of my time and part of my energy and part of my efforts to do stuff like that. Let me suggest to you that's exactly what Paul's praying for.

[29 : 38] He's praying that that's exactly what would happen. That your love would be full of knowledge and discernment so that you could approve the things that are excellent. Many of you know that I'm in charge of the biblical counseling training conference at Faith.

Some of you have been there. And because of the size of the conference, our school cannot be in session. And so everybody is off that week. And guess what?

All of my kids' friends, here's where they are. Disney World. So they're getting Facebook posts and Instagram pictures of, you know, like I'm hanging out with Mickey. And guess what my kids are doing?

My kids are serving in the conference. My kids are serving in the conference. And they work. Like their spring break is work. And they start early and they end late.

Every day. And there was that one point where I just kind of reflected on that thought, you know, am I really being fair? Am I really handling this right? I mean, boy, I kind of feel bad for my kids that everybody else's kids are going to Disney World and my kids are here.

[30 : 45] And then I decided, what am I talking about? I mean, I need to smack myself. I mean, that's what the palm of your hand is for, right? Sometimes you just got to whack yourself in the head, right? Every once in a while when you're thinking crazy, you just got to go wham, you know, and start thinking differently.

And so I thought, wait a minute, what am I talking about? In fact, they have the privilege of serving pastors from all over the country, all over the world. Many of them who are coming after getting beat up all year long.

They're looking for some encouragement and some little cute girl hands them a drink. Praise God for that. Someone works over and delivers all the lunches. Great. Praise God for that.

So what did I do? I signed them up for more work. Isn't that right? I mean, absolutely. What are they going to do instead? I'm not trying to set directions for anybody.

I'm just simply suggesting that a love characterized by knowledge and discernment results in things that are excellent. Now, the text continues with the result.

[31 : 49] Here's what happens when you approve the things that are excellent. Something else happens. You get to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ. And I would hope that's what we would want to be.

That we would want to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ. So we've covered two responses so far. Praise God for his work in my mom and dad's life.

To make it gospel centered. That he's going to continue to work all the way to the end. That his work resulted in binding your hearts together. Number two, that we pray.

That we pray that our love would grow in knowledge and discernment so that we are able to focus on the right things. To determine not simply between what is right and what is wrong, but between what is good and what is best.

Now, here's the third response. Emulate the positive examples of gospel centered thinking. In verses 12 to 26, most people don't connect this to the prayer.

[32 : 53] I think it's intently connected to the prayer. In other words, what does it look like for a person to actually do this? What does it look like for a person to approve the things that are excellent?

And Paul does that right here in verses 12 to 26. Paul makes three judgments in these verses based on gospel priorities that are in turn characterized by knowledgeable and discerning love.

Let me just take one minute to talk about each one of them. Here's number one. Progress of the gospel is more important than Paul's personal freedom.

If you were in prison for four years, would you write, Now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel. You'd be thinking, I'd really like to get out of here. I would like to be released.

But Paul has a love that is based on knowledge and discernment. And so he is able to say, wait, wait, wait, wait, wait. Wait a minute. I realize that when I'm church planning, I get a church done every three weeks.

[33 : 56] Okay, I get that. And if you read the book of Acts, that's about what it is. But God has designed this particular time in prison, four years plus, for the greater progress of the gospel.

You say, what is that greater progress? Well, the whole praetorian guard has heard about Christ. And that most of the brethren, because of his imprisonment, have far more courage to speak the word of God without fear. He says, praise God for that.

Praise God. There's actually more gospel work getting done now because of my imprisonment than would have gotten done if I had been released. He also praises God and shows his discerning love.

Love characterized by knowledge and discernment. By saying that proclamation of Christ is more important than silencing the fakers. In verses 15 to 18, he says, hey, look, there are some people who are preaching who do it out of love.

They do it for the right reasons. And then there are other people who do it essentially to say to me, you know, hey, look, you know, I hope you're enjoying your house arrest because I'm out here preaching the gospel.

[35 : 02] Is that okay with you? You know, kind of harming him, kind of like, you know, jabbing him a little bit. And he says, I don't care about that. I don't care about that. Here's what I care about.

I care that in every corner of this planet, I care that every square inch of ground there is somebody talking about Jesus. Because, quite frankly, either people repent of their sin or they suffer the consequences of that sin in eternal hell.

Those are the only choices. They either repent and they believe in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ for their salvation only, or they suffer eternally in hell forever.

That's it. That's it. And he says, hey, look, I'm not so much worried about the motivation of the fakers. I'll let God deal with that. Here's what I'm excited about.

I'm excited that there's another corner of God's earth where Jesus Christ is proclaimed. That's what I'm for. And he even says this in verses 19 to 26, that serving others is actually more important than enjoying the glories of Christ.

[36 : 10] I find this to be an amazing choice. I mean, sometimes when I think about heaven, of course, I am excited about that. But on the other hand, I want to provide for my wife. I still want to help raise our kids.

I want to ensure, to the degree that I can, that none of my kids marry a goofball. Right? I'm in all for that. However, the Apostle Paul, here's what he says.

He's doing this for all the churches. He values that for the churches. When I read the text, did you hear his heart? He says, hey, it would be better for me to enjoy the glories of Christ, but it's better for you if I remain.

In other words, he's able to discern between what is good and what is best. And I'm encouraging you to emulate that. Emulate those positive examples.

That's why Paul prays. So, how's that profitable for you and me? Well, I want to encourage you to follow the example of the Apostle Paul and those who have walked in his footsteps. And we are celebrating today the Lord's work in my dad's life.

[37 : 16] Because I believe there is a track record. Especially the last 25 years of gospel priorities. And I think this passage encourages mom and dad to continue to function that way.

I think they should not become like Demas who left for the cares of this world, even in retirement. But this passage is also for us. It's a clarion call for us to look at our own lives.

To discern where we are giving time and effort and energy. And to decide whether or not that is really about proclaiming Christ or if it's really about something else. For Paul, he just simply has this attitude.

Hey, look. I'm excited. I'm in prison. But I'm excited. And I'm excited. My life is characterized by joy because my life is centered on one thing.

I've got a mission. I've got a purpose. That gets to the final point that we're going to think about this morning. And that is to contend for the gospel.

[38 : 18] Let me just read verse 27. It says, Only. Only. Only. Only. Only. Only.

Only. Only. Got it? Only. Conduct yourself in a manner worthy of the gospel. If you have been saved by grace, only conduct yourself in a manner worthy of the gospel.

There's nothing else worth living for. That's what is worth living for. As we were singing those songs. As we were reflecting. On before the throne of God, I have a perfect plea.

A great high priest whose name is love. Whoever pleads for me. Who is that? Jesus. Who is it? Jesus. I have an intercessor.

Praise God for that. And so therefore, where is my life focus? Where is my life mission? What am I trying to accomplish? He says this. Only. Conduct yourself in a manner worthy of the gospel.

[39 : 17] Gives us purpose here. And friends, if there's someone here. You just decided to come for this day. You know my dad. And you have never come to the place where you have repented of your sin.

And trusted in the death, bread, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. You know, one of the songs that we sang this morning reminded us. That we don't bring anything. Our hands are raised and what they're full of is just filthy rags.

That's all we bring. That's all we've got. But by God's grace, he made a way. He offered something. And those filthy rags are then turned and exchanged for the clothing of the righteousness of Christ.

And friends, if you have not ever repented of your sin. Seen your sin as an offense against God. And I want to encourage you to see it today. I want to encourage you to repent.

To acknowledge your sin for what it is. And to believe in the death, bread, and resurrection of Jesus Christ as your only hope of salvation. And so when you are standing before the judge of God.

[40 : 26] And he says, why should I let you into my heaven? You're not giving the answer of, well, I was a really nice person. Yeah, I was really good. You know, I've done a whole lot of good stuff rather than bad. It's here's the answer.

I got nothing other than the death, bread, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It's all I got. And if that's not good enough, I'm not good enough. I want to encourage you.

It's either the death, bread, and resurrection of Jesus Christ or nothing. And so for those of us who know Christ. And we know that it's only the death, bread, and resurrection of Jesus Christ or it's nothing.

It gives us mission. It gives us purpose. It gives us energy. It gives us a reason to wake up in the morning. It gives us a reason to stand up and fight. To contend.

So I'm going to encourage you to be united in your gospel priorities. Even if you face difficulties. That's what Paul says. He says, hey, look, only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy.

[41 : 24] And don't be worried about your opponents. Don't be worried about suffering. Because if God in his grace chooses to bring about suffering, then he is going to allow that to result in his praise and glory.

Assuming you seek to continue to contend for the gospel in the midst of it. I hope a year from now to hear that there are so many servants contending for the gospel that the ministry here is just flourishing.

You know, when Jack said, you know, pray for the deacons to cover all of Pastor Saul's work. I couldn't help but think, well, why not pray for everybody?

Pray for everybody. Not just the deacons. Everybody. Everybody has to do something. If you're going to contend for the gospel, everybody has to do something.

I hope that a year from now, Maranatha is a brighter light in this community and known far and wide as being a gospel-centered place.

[42 : 34] You want to know where to learn about Jesus? Show up on Treby Road. You want to know what it looks like to develop love based on knowledge and discernment? Show up on Treby Road.

And I hope to hear that you've hired a replacement for my dad who will serve as one of the generals. He's marching into war. Fully armed with both the armor and power of God.

Now, let me just conclude by offering a word of thanks to you on behalf of my wife and I. Thank you for being a wonderful church family. Yesterday was special because it was the culmination of 30 years of really ministry involvement here.

So thank you for doing that. Thank you for being an instrument of growth in his life over the past 30 years. He's not the person that he was 30 years ago.

Thank you for accepting his ministry and seeking to learn from it. Paul prayed that when he ministered, he prayed that the people would accept that ministry.

[43 : 39] So thank you for doing that. Thank you for being financially generous with him and mom so that they could devote their lives to gospel-centered vocational ministry. We appreciate that as his kids.

Thank you for giving him the opportunity to continue to serve around here so that he can remain gospel-centered. And then finally, thank you for giving me the chance to speak about God's work in his life and the opportunity to encourage and challenge you.

Let's pray. Father, thank you for your amazing work. Thank you that you take us and you accept us as sinners. And you say that you demonstrated your love for us while we were sinners, while we were rebels.

And Lord, we thank you for that wonderful privilege. And Lord, as we sang that before the throne of God, we have a perfect high priest whose name is love, whoever intercedes for us.

Thank you for that. And Lord, I'm asking now that you would help us to respond to a day like today with praise, with prayer, with emulation, and with focus.

[44 : 49] In Jesus' name, amen.