

The Way of an Excellent Family

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[0 : 0 0] Yeah. So is everybody awake now? We got that little high-pitched thing going on, still there? Oh, man. Okay. So hopefully that will go away and won't come back, or otherwise we're going to, well, I guess you guys will be awake just not paying attention, that's all. So, all right.

Okay. Well, we got that out of the way. I'm going to open us up in prayer. My name is Dave Nannery. I'm an associate pastor here at Squamish Baptist Church, and it's great to have all of us here together today.

I'm going to pray for us as we prepare to hear God's word for us this morning. Father, you know that we are people who are not born wise. We are people who wisdom must be learned, and we confess that we are often slow to learn it.

Lord God, we ask that we may have your heart to understand things the way that you do, to see things the way you do, to hear things the way that you do.

We come to you confessing that we lack that. We thank you that your Holy Spirit is a spirit of wisdom, that you gave us your son as this perfect example of wisdom.

[1 : 2 1] And I pray even as I preach, God, I know that what I have prepared is just only a tiny part of the wisdom available in Christ. And so I ask God if there is anything beyond what I have prepared that needs to be said this morning.

Lord, may you do that. And Lord, is there anything that I have prepared that is not helpful? If so, Lord God, take that away. May we be attentive to the word that is preached.

May we be attentive to your truth. And may we begin to understand all that we need in Christ Jesus. Amen. Amen. Okay, well, happy to have a full house here today.

I know that we're here for worshipping together for the next three weeks, I believe, as we lead up to the family conference that is taking place at the end of the month, where we'll be having Chris Hamilton come and speak for the second year in a row.

I'm looking forward to that. And I have the privilege of being kind of the first lead-off speaker in our lead-up to the family conference as we are preparing for that time of teaching on marriage and family.

[2 : 2 8] Now, since one of my primary roles at our church is counseling, BK asked me to preach a sermon about lessons from the counseling couch about marriage and family.

So my first thought was, well, where to begin? Where to begin? There just is no way in one single sermon to discuss all the ways that marriage and family can go bad.

You know, I thought of a famous line. There's this famous line by the Russian author Leo Tolstoy. His very first novel, he opened with this sentence, happy families are all alike. Every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way.

And I was like, that's pretty insightful. I don't know what it is about 19th century Russian novelists getting the human condition, but they seem to. There is one right path, and there are many wrong ones.

There is the way of an excellent family, and there are many ways to a less than excellent family and a less than excellent marriage. There is a lot that we could say to talk about the wrong paths.

[3 : 3 6] I mean, think of how many wrong paths that you have seen over the course of your life, maybe in other people's marriage and family, maybe in your own, maybe the one you grew up in, maybe the one that you've begun on your own.

We can think of men who don't understand their wives' longings for safety and feelings of being disregarded. We can think of women who don't understand their husbands' longings for honor and feelings of powerlessness.

We can think of the distrust that enters marriage. We can think of shame that sabotages everything. Children who need foundations of safety, love, calling, and correction, but aren't receiving it. Family relationships that seem to work great when everyone gets what they want, but then big life changes happen. Things fall apart. And all of a sudden, everyone is at each other's throats. Maybe it would be good to take it all back to what gets in the way of love, what gets in the way of relationships of love in our families, in our marriages.

[4 : 44] Because if true, genuine love is present in a family relationship, then perhaps healing and hope may be possible. So what blocks that? Well, after two millennia of Christian teaching on marriage and cultures, our Western cultures being sort of saturated in Christian teaching to the point that we take it for granted, it is part of the fabric of Western culture that we don't realize is a heritage that came from the Christian faith.

Our culture assumes that love ought to be present in marriage. That love ought to be present in marriage, which, by the way, that was not always a cultural assumption. So during a wedding ceremony, a lot of times, when a family is being formed in that way, what's the most commonly read passage of the Bible? Well, if you've been to a lot of weddings, especially Christian ones, it's always 1 Corinthians 13, the love chapter.

And it's a passage that has a familiar ring to those who know their Bibles well. And it's quite beautiful. And yet, while it is all about love and what love is, this chapter, 1 Corinthians 13, it was not actually written about husband and wife.

It was not written about parents and children. It was written about relationships within a local church. How necessary it is for our relationships here to be characterized by true, genuine love.

[6 : 19] So, is it appropriate to read such a passage at a wedding? Well, some people who are real, you know, maybe real crotchety sticklers would say, no, no, that's for the church.

Well, you know what? I think it's perfectly appropriate to read it at a wedding. Because here's the reality. Nearly all marriage problems are at the core just relationship problems.

Problems with other people and problems with ourselves. Relationship problems at their most intense. Because marriage and family are intensely concentrated relationships.

Those are the people closest to you. Those are the ones that see all the ugliness. Those are the ones you have to work the closest with. Those are the ones you depend on and they depend on you. And in that intensely concentrated relationship, that's when things can get very, very hard. If there are problems within us, that's where they often come out. Even thorny problems that seem like, oh, this is marriage and family specific. Like money, sex, in-laws, right?

[7 : 26] Nobody has in-law problems here, I'm sure. These all, when you really drill down underneath them, these are problems that really, the problems that are underneath those problems exist in all of our relationships.

And so it is that a chapter in the Bible about healthy, righteous relationships of love, that is a chapter that is indeed well-suited to learning the way of an excellent family.

So let me start by reading 1 Corinthians 13. And I want to give you the context of this. Because the context is important to really understanding what Paul is doing here.

That he's not giving a list of do's and don'ts. He's teaching a whole way of life. And so I'm going to start back in chapter 12, verse 27. And then read to the end of chapter 13. Now, if you're using one of the Bibles, our ushers' handout, so first of all, I'd say, if you do not have a copy of the Bible with you, you'll need one for this sermon.

So raise your hand high above your head and hold it up there. And our ushers will be happy to provide you with a Bible. Mihai, there's one in the back row there. Thank you. And if you're using one of the Bibles, our ushers' handout, that'll be on page 959.

[8 : 41] And I'm going to start in chapter 12, verse 27 of 1 Corinthians. Here's what Paul writes to the church, the Apostle Paul writes to the church in Corinth. He says, now, you are, you collectively are the body of Christ and individually members of it.

And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, administrating, and various kinds of tongues.

Are all apostles, are all prophets, are all teachers, do all work miracles, do all possess gifts of healing, do all speak with tongues, do all interpret, but earnestly desire the higher gifts.

And I will show you a still more excellent way. If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.

And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.

[9 : 54] If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient and kind. Love does not envy or boast. It is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way.

It is not irritable or resentful. It does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away. As for tongues, they will cease. As for knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part, but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away.

When I was a child, I spoke like a child. I thought like a child. I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways.

[11 : 06] For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part.

Then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known. So now, faith, hope, and love abide. These three.

But the greatest of these is love. Now by starting in chapter 12, you can see that the Apostle Paul is writing about love in the context of one particular problem that was happening in the church of Corinth.

So as it turns out, the first century city of Corinth had a church in it that was one of the most troubled churches you'll ever hear about.

When you read 1 Corinthians, and you read through it, and you pay attention to what is going on in this church, you just want to shake your head about how screwed up these people were.

[12 : 12] If the Corinthians are a church family, then they are a dysfunctional family that could have their own reality show. So it turns out, you know, some people say, well, 21st century North American church is so screwed up and messed up, but we need to go back to the early church when everything was wonderful and perfect.

No! Things have always been screwed up in churches. Messed up churches full of messed up people and messed up relationships. And I'm going to tell you something that we would never put on a billboard ad for either of our churches.

If we were being honest, we might say, come to our church, we're full of difficult people. Some people are always in search of a church where everybody is easy to get along with and behaves themselves wonderfully and are all put together.

And I can assure you that, first of all, such a church doesn't exist. Second of all, if it did, you would screw it up when you joined it. Believe it or not, church is actually meant to be a place of difficult relationships.

It's supposed to be. It's meant to be a place where there are enough wise, godly people in that church to help you.

[13 : 39] Because by default, you do not know how to respond well to difficult people. And those other people don't know how to respond well to difficult you.

Church is meant to be a place where there are wise, godly people. Just enough of them to help you learn, to help you grow and mature in knowing how to respond with love, grace, and wisdom to all the people sitting around you, especially the difficult ones.

And so it was in Corinth. Paul is helping the people, the difficult people of this difficult church. And by the way, I should say, Paul himself is pulling, well, you know, he was balding, but pulling out his hair, trying to help these people.

He's finding them difficult. But he is in it with them, and he is helping them learn how to love each other. And that's what this chapter is about. There was a difficult spiritual problem in the culture of the Corinthian church.

Some people were thinking highly of themselves at others' expense. And that was the whole culture, the whole fabric of the church.

[14 : 54] It dominated the culture of this church, this obsession with status, this obsession with who's the bigger person. Some people in the church thought of themselves as superior, wealthier, wiser, more put together than other people.

As a result, they were running over other people in the church in order to pursue their own interests or desires. And by the way, those getting run over weren't responding super graciously either, necessarily.

They just felt bad that they were losing the game, and they wanted to be winning. The way this behavior shows up in chapter 12 is this. Some of the people of the church have, the Holy Spirit had given them some rather spectacular spiritual gifts.

They were enabled to speak in tongues. Some could do miraculous healings. Some were prophesying. And, oh man, quickly, these were seen as the glamorous gifts, right?

The pyrotechnic spiritual gifts. These are the ones everybody wanted. And those who had them were very pleased to show them off in the church gathering.

[16:03] They felt really good taking over the church gathering, showing off their glorious, glamorous gifts. They were the super Christians of the church.

And those who didn't have them, didn't have those gifts, felt like they were an inferior class of Christian. I would say many Christian traditions go wrong.

This is the Baptist in me speaking out. When we have two classes of Christians. The ones who, oh, we have received the Spirit and been baptized in it in a way that you haven't.

Or, we are the clergy, you are the laity. Anytime you have a church tradition that creates two classes of Christians, it completely runs against everything Paul is talking about here.

The whole point Paul is saying is there are no two classes of Christians. We're all in this together. There are none. And maybe you think, well, I'm inferior. Because who wants the gift of administration?

[17:02] Boy, is that glamorous, right? What if God's gift to you were the ability to run a good Excel spreadsheet, right? How about the gift of generosity? People are like, oh, no, not that gift, please.

The one where I empty my wallet. What kind of awards is that going to give you? Well, the Corinthians were all about the spectacular super Christians.

And they looked down on those who were gifted in less spectacular ways. And so, chapter 12, Paul is reminding them that, hey, you all, you all together are the body of Christ.

You're Christ's people on this earth. And individually, you're members of it. In other words, you're just all parts of the same body, meant to function together, meant to feel together, meant to belong together.

And you are not meant to elevate yourselves above one another. You are not meant to be super Christians. So not everyone is gifted in these spectacular ways.

[18:02] That's okay. Because the excellent way of life that God has called us to, it's not about having a big platform and putting on a glorious show. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 12, verse 31, I will show you a still more excellent way.

You want an excellent way of life? Let me show you what it is. And then in chapter 13, he begins with verses 1 to 3. And he kind of skewers some of the fantasies that these Corinthians have.

Because he writes some things that sound like comic book superhero stuff. These absurd, over-the-top fantasies. What if I could speak in the tongues of men and of angels?

What if I had prophetic powers and understood all mysteries and all hidden knowledge? What if I had jaw-dropping faith that with a word I could move mountains? What if I gave away all that I had in a magnificent gesture of charity?

What if I even died in the fire? A martyr's death. A glorious act of self-sacrifice. And now the Corinthians, they've got big stars in their eyes.

[19:13] Whoa. What a spiritual giant I could be. How glorious. Oh, to be filled with such power and wisdom and virtue.

Such perfect super-Christians. It's comic book stuff. And Paul is giving them that over-the-top fantasy of their ideal spiritual selves.

Verses 1 to 3 are all about the way of the glorious self. They're about the way of the glorious self. You see, the Corinthians, they were always longing, always aching, always needing to be that glorious self.

They might be the most North American people in the New Testament. In the counseling world, it's called a neurosis.

You have a perfect ideal self that you envision. That you daydream about. That you long to be. That you have to be.

[20 : 17] To be okay. Your glorious self, think about it as standing at the top of a great ladder. And you're trying to climb up and get there. Always looking up at it.

Who is that glorious self? Well, it's the best version of you. It's you, powerful and competent. It's you, hardworking and diligent.

It's you, rich and successful. It's you, wickedly clever and funny. It's you, doing everything perfectly. Getting everything right.

It's you, having all the right answers. It's you, rescuing and saving everybody. It's you, popular and beautiful.

It's you, loved and admired by everyone. It's you, surrounded by the perfect family. It's you, righteous and religious.

[21 : 18] Oh. At times, perhaps you feel like, yeah, you're there. You probably wouldn't admit it, but in your heart, you feel like, yeah, yeah, that's me.

That's, I'm actually doing pretty good. You're on top of the ladder. King of the world. Or at least, you know, maybe you feel okay about yourself for once when you're feeling that way. You stand atop the ladder saying, you know what?

I'm a pretty good husband. Looking down at all those other guys, all those husbands out there who are just complete total schmucks. Then you start looking around at other people.

And to your horror, it seems that there are other people higher on the ladder than you, which means that you are lower on the ladder than you thought you were.

Oh, no. Oh, no. My ideal glorious self is a lot farther away than I thought. You feel envious and threatened. Oh, no. So and so is so much.

[22 : 17] She's such a better mom than I am. Oh, no. I mean, that's the Squamish Mom's Facebook group in a nutshell, isn't it, right? You know, maybe a family member does something that bursts your bubble, that makes you realize how far down the ladder you really are.

Someone does something to you and all of a sudden, oh, no, I'm down at the bottom of the ladder, exposed and humiliated. Maybe you're in high school and your school friends see your parents' behavior and honestly, you just want to shrivel up and die.

My parents are just so embarrassing. Maybe it happens so much that you just start to hate who you are so far down the ladder from your ideal glorious self.

And when we're in that place, sometimes what we do is we harass and shame ourselves and beat ourselves up to get back up the ladder to that glory.

We crack the whip on ourselves. You say to yourself, I suck. I hate myself. I should be better. I should be better. Do better. Always with our eyes on the superhero fantasy, that glorious self that we dream of being, that we wish we could be.

[23 : 36] We oscillate between either feeling we're there and realizing we're not. Sometimes, that's the whole reason we got married in the first place and started a family in the first place.

We wanted to be glorious, to feel glorious, to achieve glory. I mean, if you doubt that, turn on the radio, listen to nearly any popular love song from the last 50 years.

What are they all about? You make me feel glorious. Or at least better about myself and my life. Or at least feel like, hey, I'm doing okay.

I'm doing okay. We place that pressure not only on ourselves, but on everybody around us. Listen, this is where, these are how things go really bad in a family.

My spouse needs to make me feel okay or glorious. My family needs to make me feel like my life is on track. Sometimes people join a church for this reason.

[24 : 42] I've seen people come to faith because they wanted to be surrounded by a bunch of people that make them feel put together, like they're doing okay, like they're doing glorious. And then, when that church shows problems, when it's failing to deliver that feeling of glory or that feeling of being okay, they jump ship, move on to the next one.

And all of this has nothing to do with love. That system of feeling on top of the world and full of yourself or feeling just angry at yourself, hating yourself for not being that great.

All of that is pride. That's what the Bible calls pride. Even when it feels awful, that obsession with the glorious self. And Paul says, love cannot exist in a heart consumed by that way of thinking. Here's what he says about the glorious self. If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.

And if I have prophetic powers and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.

[26 : 07] If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing. What is the glorious self?

What is that ideal self at the top of the ladder that you wish you could be? That you beat yourself up to be? That you rage against other people because they get in the way of you being that?

Without love, it is ugly noise. Without love, it is nothing at all. Without love, that glorious self will gain you nothing. That is where the way of the glorious self leads nowhere.

Nothing. Nothing. And what does it do to our family relationships? But where it leads your church, your marriage, and your family is nowhere good. When we think this way, there are ugly consequences of the glorious self that come out in our behavior.

So the consequences of the glorious self are described in part by the popular marriage counselors, John and Julie Gottman. They are well known for describing what they call the four horsemen that destroy a marriage.

[27 : 18] And I would add, destroy a whole family. For that matter, destroy a church. Criticism. Attacking the other person at the core of their character and being. So this is different from, you know, critiquing someone in a constructive way.

This is really going after someone at the core of their character. You never think about how your behavior is affecting other people. You're not just forgetful, you're selfish. You don't care about me at all.

Criticism then spills, builds up to contempt. Treating the other person as less than human with disrespect.

Mocking them with sarcasm. Ridiculing them. Mimicking them to make fun of them. Rolling our eyes in irritation. Making them feel low and despised and worthless.

Showing them that you are superior. Superior. And the Gottmans say that contempt is the single greatest predictor of divorce. Criticism and contempt then lead to defensiveness.

[28 : 20] We feel unjustly accused. So we find excuses. Play the innocent victim. Protecting ourselves by reversing the blame. Pointing out the other person's fault. Which only makes the other person, guess what?

More upset. You know how many marriage arguments defensiveness has solved? None. You know it. You know how many family arguments defensiveness has solved? None.

And all this leads to the fourth horseman. Which is just where things go in the end. Stonewalling. Stonewalling. That's when you just withdraw. You shut down. You go quiet. Turn away.

Act busy. Because you're just overwhelmed. And it's the easiest thing to do in the face of the other three horsemen. And all of those, building on one another, is what kills a marriage and a family.

And in part, it is a consequence of the way of the glorious self. I feel horrible because I'm not at the top of the ladder.

[29 : 20] So I take it out on you. Or maybe you're the one who dragged me down the ladder. Away from the glorious person I would be.

If only I weren't married to you. If only you weren't such a misbehaving child. If only you weren't such bad parents. When your eyes are fixed on the glorious self.

I mean, you've been there, okay? You know what I'm talking about. And if you don't know what I'm talking about. Yeah, you've been there. You just may not realize it.

When your eyes are fixed on the glorious self. Don't you become impatient with the faults of other people. Don't you become unkind in your criticism.

Don't you become envious of others' success. Aren't you, don't you start looking for, and just finding these little ways to elevate yourself. These subtle ways to feel better about yourself.

[30 : 22] We become arrogant and rude toward one another. Things have to be done my way. We get irritable and resentful toward those who are dragging us down.

And holding us back. In fact, over time we start to enjoy all these little unrighteous ways of behaving. Defying your parents. Shaming your husband.

Intimidating your wife. Start to enjoy putting others in their place. Shutting them down with our powerful emotions. Shutting them down with our relentless logic.

We become displeased. When others confront us even gently with God's truth. We avoid difficult conflicts. We start becoming suspicious of the motives of others.

I know why you're doing that. I know why you're saying that. We become cynical toward everyone. Oh, they're all like that. In time, we start finding more and more people unbearable to be around. [31 : 27] You know, it's, I love the world. It's people I just can't stand. So much for the way of the glorious self. As Tolstoy said, every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way.

And so Paul, at this point, steps in. He says to you and me, I will show you a more excellent way. There is a better way. You do not have to live like that.

There is a better way to live. And he tells us about it in verses 4 through 7. Here's the picture of that better way. Love is patient and kind.

Love does not envy or boast. It is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way. It is not irritable or resentful.

It does not rejoice at wrongdoing. But rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things. Believes all things.

[32 : 30] Hopes all things. Endures all things. This humble, spirit-led love is the way of an excellent family.

It is very hard for us. But not for God. And so we ask, what do we do?

How do we learn the way of love? How do we learn the art of wisdom and grace in our relationships? How do we learn to become, as individuals, as a family, to become what God has called us to be for the sake of our families and above all for the sake of our Lord?

Paul continues on in verse 8. Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away. As for tongues, they will cease.

As for knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part. But when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away.

[33 : 40] When I was a child, I spoke like a child. I thought like a child. I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways.

For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part. Then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.

So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three. For the greatest of these is love. So here we find the secret. You must choose between the glorious self or the glorious Christ.

Make your decision. The glorious self or the glorious Christ. Your glorious self at the top of the ladder, who you've been beating yourself up all your life to be, you have to kill it.

You have to crucify it. It has to end. That self that wants to be glorious apart from God. That follows the serpent's call.

[35 : 00] You will be like God. You will be glorious. And you can do that on your own. You can make your way up that ladder. Just as long as other people don't get in the way.

It must be crucified. crucified. Paul understood this keenly. Here's the thing. He had to kill his own glorious self too.

And you know that because of the scripture that Clay read for us earlier in the worship service in Galatians chapter 2 where he says, I have been crucified with Christ.

It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.

Where is Paul looking? At himself, elevated, glorious, ideal, wonderful.

[36 : 13] He says, that has been crucified. I have thrown away the ladder. My eyes are fixed on Christ who lives in me.

He loved me. He gave himself for me. When Paul, when he is writing these things and he is summoning you too to crucify that glorious self, Paul, first of all, he is not asking you to go where he himself has not gone.

Like a good shepherd, Paul is saying, I have done this. Follow me. Come with me as I follow Christ. because Jesus Christ did this first.

This is the way of the Christian life, the way of humility. And as one, that Jesus Christ and that the Apostle Paul say, come.

Your glorious, ideal self has to go. Come with me. Humble yourself under God's mighty hand and he will be the one to lift you up.

[37 : 27] Not your job. Not your job. Not your job. And only there can you live by faith in the Son of God and say, it is Christ who lives in me.

And only there can you say, he loved me and he gave himself for me. And now, only there can you start to learn the pathway of love, that most excellent way.

In 1 Corinthians 13, Paul gives us three reasons to join him. Why would we do this? Why would we take such an incredible risk to crucify our glorious selves?

In verses 8 through 10, he tells the Corinthians, here's what is going to happen to those glorious fantasies about yourself. So let's say you're a person who does all these amazing prophecies and tongues and has all this hidden knowledge.

He says, guess what? It's got an expiration date. Something more perfect is coming. My friends, think about all the daydreams you've had about who you could be and what you could do and how wonderful you could become.

[38 : 38] That glorious self is like the latest iPhone. It's shiny and glorious and obsolete in a few years. You know it. Maybe you've met, had some of your dreams and found out they go obsolete pretty fast, don't they?

It's never enough. They either lose their luster or they just fall apart. But Paul says about love, guess what?

Love never ends. It is never going to go out of fashion. That is why it is so much better.

Not only will the glorious self be obsolete, but second, it's just such a childish way to think. Let's just be honest about that and I'll be the first to admit it. I have all these little glorious fantasies.

You can ask me about some of them if you want and I'll even admit a few of them to you, right? And they're childish. They're just silly. They sound glorious in our heads, but if you were to say it out loud, you'd be like, oh, that's kind of embarrassing.

[39 : 45] And Paul writes in verse 11, well, when I was a child, I spoke like a child. I thought like a child. I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways.

Enough of these childish daydreams and fantasies. Enough of, I want to be a real man. I want to be a good mom. I want to be popular and successful and amazing.

I want everything to do. Enough of being wonderful and amazing and doing everything right so you can feel great about yourself. Grow up. Okay? I'm not just saying this.

You don't say this to me. Grow up. Give up the childish ways of the glorious self. The third reason to join Paul in crucifying your glorious self.

you are trading it in for something that is far more glorious. Because he writes in verse 12, you know, now we see in a mirror dimly, but then, face to face, now I know in part, then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.

[40 : 58] He's talking about these mirrors, you know, mirrors at the time weren't quite as nice. He's basically saying the equivalent of like, now we're on a Zoom call that's stuttering and low resolution.

You can barely make up the other person and it's like, it's all messed up and garbled. But then, we're sitting in a room face to face, talking, and the real person is physically with you.

You know the difference. There is a day coming and it is getting nearer every day when we will see face to face the Savior who loved us and gave himself for us.

We're going to see him as he is. Glorious and perfect in everything we could just never be. There is a day when he will return to judge the world and set all things right when he appears.

There is a day when all of the glorious ideal selves will be swept away with one look at his face and only what is real and good and true will remain forever and ever.

[42 : 12] And on that day, Paul says, I'm going to know fully even as I have been fully known. To know him fully and to love him fully and to realize that all of this time, even though you couldn't see clearly, he did and that you have been fully known and fully loved.

To realize that all this time it was never your job to save yourself by climbing the ladder and becoming that glorious self. Your glory is God's job, not yours.

It is his job to make you okay. It is his job to forgive your sins. It is his job to wash you clean, to restore you, to call you by his name, to unite you with his own son, to seat you with Jesus Christ in the heavenly places, to reign with him forever and ever.

to see your savior face to face and realize that you have been glorified and have become like him as much as any human being can be. That is what God does for us.

That is the promise of salvation in the gospel of Jesus Christ and it is not something you climb the ladder and achieve so you can throw away your ladder.

[43 : 44] Let it go. abandon the childish ways. If you have believed and entrusted yourself to Jesus Christ, the son of God, the truth about you is glorious.

And so now you fix your eyes not on yourself but on him. Those who behold him become like him. when we stare at our own feet we get unstable.

When we lift our eyes and look at Jesus Christ we stabilize. We become like him. I love reading the four gospels.

I recommend it to everyone. And I love reading them not just for the theological content which is amazing, not for the knowledge of God in the intellectual sense but because you get a sense of what Jesus Christ is like as a person.

Watch the way and it's so fun just put yourself in Jesus' shoes. Imagine all these people coming at him. The way they're acting towards him, the demands they're making of him, the bad behavior around him, their attempts to trick him and catch him.

[44 : 56] He was surrounded by difficult people at every turn. And when you put yourself in that place and think here's how I would respond to that and then you look at how Jesus does, it blows your mind.

He is so good. He is so wise. He is so right and true and he does it all the way up to the cross. He stands before Pontius Pilate and he's actually inquiring of Pilate's soul as Pilate holds the power of life and death over him.

Who does that? That is our Lord and Savior. That is who he is. I can tell you that he is glorious and I can tell you that he is love.

I can tell you on every page, I give you example after example of where he is patient and kind, that Jesus does not envy or boast. He is not arrogant or rude. He does not insist on his own way at others' expense.

He is not irritable or resentful. He does not rejoice at wrongdoing. He rejoices with the truth. Jesus bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

[46 : 10] That is his very nature. That is his heart and nothing can separate us from his love. And so that is why Paul concludes with verse 13.

Now, faith, hope, and love abide these three. But the greatest of these is love. And what Paul is saying it all boils down to three things in this life.

Faith in Jesus Christ. Do you, have you entrusted yourself to him? Letting go of trying to save yourself by becoming ideal and glorious and amazing. And it says, saying, that's Jesus' job.

I'm just here to worship him and follow him. I entrust myself to him to save me from my sins. I have faith in him. My confidence is in Jesus Christ.

Hope in his return. What is our only hope in life and death? That I belong, body and soul, to my Savior, Jesus Christ. hope that he is coming back again and all will be made right when he appears.

[47 : 19] And the love of God that has taken root in our hearts because we have been loved. Of those, faith, hope, and love, one day, faith will no longer be needed because we will see him.

Faith will be replaced by sight. One day, hope will be fulfilled. You don't have to hope when you have everything when Christ returns.

But you know what? There will never be a time when love is not needed. There will never be a time when love is not obsolete. Your glorious self is going to be obsolete.

Sometimes people look at me as a pastor and seem to think that this is such a glorious position.

Well, first of all, I can assure you it is not. If it ever looks glorious, let me tell you, it feels different on the inside.

But second of all, even if it were, when Christ returns, I'm out of a job. That's going to be wonderful.

[48 : 36] When Christ returns, every counselor is out of a job. When Christ returns, that's going to be good. But you know what? Love will never be obsolete.

If you can learn to love, you will never be out of a job. For the sake of your family, even more so for the sake of Christ, invest in love. Like, look, some of us are all about investments.

You know, you've got your TFSA, you've got your RESP for your kids, you've got an RESP for your wife, your family, and those have an expiration date. But love doesn't.

Invest in the relational wisdom that you can learn from Christ and that you can learn together with your fellow believers. Fix your eyes on him. Do it together. In the end, I would say that's what all good counseling does.

It teaches you how to look from yourself and to look at Jesus Christ and to embrace the excellent way. The best time, if you're wondering, when's the best time to get help?

[49 : 39] Well, first of all, the best time is when you're young and single. The second best time is now. It's never too late. Satan would love for you to say, it's too late, you're too old, you can't learn, can't teach an old dog new tricks.

That's his lie. It is never too late to learn how to love. Even on your deathbed, you can still learn. That is how you learn the way of an excellent family. The band is going to come up as I pray and we're going to sing a countercultural song, familiar but very countercultural because rather than singing a love song about the glorious self, we're going to be singing about the glorious Christ. because having our eyes on him and knowing who he is, that is the more excellent way. Let me pray. Our God and Father, I thank you.

You did not save us in a way that we could boast, in a way that we could look at ourselves and say, there was something good and glorious about me that made God look at me and think, I'm going to save you.

[50 : 53] There's nothing superior about us, nothing that we can elevate ourselves above others. Whatever good we have comes from you, God. Whatever good that we are is from your hand.

That is the way things ought to be, to let you be the Savior, to recognize that you made this whole world to honor your Son, to glorify him, so that people would honor the Son the same way they honor the Father.

That is how things ought to be. That is how our souls were made. And so, Lord God, let us crucify our ideal glorious selves.

Let them go. It just destroys us, destroys our families, destroys our marriages, makes us demanding, ugly people. And Lord God, teach us the way of love.

We don't know it. We have so far to go. But our eyes are on Jesus. And your word gives us just enough light for the next step of our journey.

[52 : 01] And so, with our eyes on him, fixed on the glorious Christ, bring us safely home, we pray, O Lord. We long for that day. Amen.