

Spiritual Work

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[0 : 00] Now, where is that guy? I don't know about the introduction, but it's good to be here tonight. I met Brother Gardner in 1977, and he started Liberty Baptist Church in Cartersville that year, and I started Liberty Baptist Church in Stockbridge, Georgia.

And we just met at one of the churches that's not in business anymore. And so we've been friends since. We supported Brother and Mrs. Gardner all the years in Peru and a couple of the kids on down the line, okay?

And many of you I know, and many of you I don't, but let me give you just a little bit here. We're now in 2010, after 33 years, I resigned the pastorate.

Not the ministry, but the pastorate. I thought it would be the ministry, but God didn't sit that way. And so we did and called somebody else in Stockbridge at Liberty Baptist. But then after about three years, God showed me they didn't need two pastors there.

And so if you've ever been, you know what I mean. And so we moved south, and we went to, we drove 35 minutes every, one way, every service to Lighthouse Baptist Church in Jackson, Georgia, and my pastor, Chad Gordon.

[1 : 07] And one of my hardest things I've had to do is to realize I'm not number one anymore. I now have a pastor, okay? And, but we get along very well. And he would be here tonight, except they're having a big three-week, I mean three-night thing.

Some of you heard, for teenagers, called the war. And I will give many teenagers to be saved. There were a lot of enrollees there and this kind of thing. And so he would have come otherwise. But I just wanted, I said that to say this.

My pastor, as I do, my pastor loves vision and, you know, the missionary aspect. He loves mission. And when he came five years ago, my church, I took a youth pastor and started that church many years ago.

And then he, when I got there, he left. I couldn't figure that out too much, you know. But anyway, but Chad came. And so since then, we went from about 21 missionaries to now 61 missionaries.

And still adding some more. And so I wanted to say many of you, we support. About half of those are vision missionaries. And I know you send letters.

[2 : 09] And I know you because all your letters come through my computer, okay? And so it come from the church or from you individually through my computer so I know what's going on. And so what I was going to say, if you send letters and we don't support you, we just can't get to you yet.

And so don't give up on us because he really loves this ministry here. And I love this ministry too. And I asked Miss Betty tonight, I said, did you bring my sermon? Because she had said, you know, we're expecting some dynamic tonight.

And I said, well, you're going to preach? And so, but anyway, obviously they took off. I never understand when I went to a church and then the pastor left, either he really trusts me or he knows something, okay?

And so I know who's there it is. But anyway, I spent a lot of time. My wife passes here with me tonight. She has a real bad active case of rheumatoid arthritis and not feeling well at all today. We're trying to desperately get treatment somewhere there and this kind of thing.

Had it since the mid-90s. And I want you, that's what Brother Austin was mentioned when we started tonight. Pray for her if you would. Next month, we celebrate our 57th wedding anniversary.

[3 : 14] Now, as the old preacher said, she deserves a cardboard cookie or something when she gets to heaven. Amen. But it doesn't mean, if you're a pastor's wife or a missionary's wife, you know exactly what I'm talking about, right? And so it gets rough sometimes.

But I'll ask you one more question before I get to Scrooge tonight as I think about it. How many in, or maybe two questions. How many in here tonight are over 65? 65. Raise your hand if you're over 65.

Okay. Got a young crowd tonight, all right. Here's the reason I say that. Well, let me give the second question first. How many of you are not from the South? All right. I'm going to change sermon and preach on salvation tonight.

But they might throw me out for that, all right. Some of them to raise their hand. They're good people. I know some of them, okay. But I'm just going to tell you, I need your help tonight in a couple of areas.

I'll be, in two weeks, I'll be 77. Now, I know when you look at that profile, you won't believe it, okay. But anyway, I will be. And here's what you've got to look forward to. We both had cataract surgeries.

[4 : 19] And now, I can't read a thing without these. These are dollar store glasses. You can get a bunch of them, okay. Because I break them all the time. But the other thing, if I put them on, I can't even see you hardly.

And so, it's that double thing, you know, double whammy there. And I'll be taking them off and on some. And then I have, I got a temporary bridge right up here, okay. And it did feel funny, you know.

And so, but anyway, I was going to tell you, in the South. Now, listen, in the South, when an old guy like me makes a mistake, here's what they say.

Bless his heart. So, if I hear you say that, I'll know what that means, okay. But you'll forgive me. Don't tell Brother Gardner. I think we're on, though. So, I can't get away with anything.

I told my wife, I said, if you go with me, I can't speak evangelistically. I'll have to tell the truth. You know, and so, so she's here tonight. And so, you know how that goes. But if you will or not, very quickly.

[5 : 18] And are we on a regular schedule or a cloth or what are we on? Okay. And if you're from the South, you know when a preacher takes his watch off what that means. Absolutely nothing.

Okay. But I'll try to be prompt tonight. But I thought about it and thought about it. It's not a candy. It's not a candy stick. And I'm not a prolific preacher, okay. I have the gift of teaching.

And I've been teaching Bible college since 1980-something. And taught my first Sunday school lesson to adults in 1965, I think. And that's been my, I built a church on steady diet, you know.

Sometimes I get a little loud, but most of the time not, you know. Just so I want you to understand what we are tonight. If you will, please take your Bibles tonight and turn with me to Galatians chapter 2. Galatians chapter 2. There are two very familiar scriptures.

I mean, you don't even need hardly. But I want to read two scriptures only here, and we'll go to another one at the end tonight. But Galatians 2, verses 20 and 21. And I want to bring something to you tonight. I believe it will help you. It helped me in days gone by.

[6 : 22] And it will help you to be missionaries. But it will help you if I'm thinking tonight about church members who are not missionaries. They're not full-time Christian service. They're not this kind of thing. And I want to pose a question.

I want to read two verses first. Galatians chapter 2 by Paul, very, 220. It's very well known. Paul said, Now, verse verse 21, when I get to it in a few minutes, I do not frustrate the grace of God.

Father, please help us a little while tonight. Lord, it's such a privilege to be in this pulpit tonight. So many good things coming out of this place right here, Lord. We pray for it. We've known the gardeners for so long and some of their children, Lord.

It's now grown, been on mission fields, some pastoring now. And, Father, and some of these missionaries here, what a great job is being done here in this place. And I pray tonight for this one singular moment.

You might bless us tonight for a while and then our meeting in the morning with the missionaries, Father. And I pray that, no, I'm not much, but if I can help a little bit, that's what I'm here for. And I pray that we might have attention tonight and understand the short time we have.

[7 : 35] In Christ's name I pray. Amen. When I was growing up and I was, let's sort of separate the southerners and northerners, okay. If you're from the north or from the city, you were reared.

But I was raised, okay. And I was raised in the southern part of middle Georgia. I'm the country, okay. I was more or less a loner. We had four kids. But those four kids were, I was by eight years the youngest.

So I was on the farm. I virtually grew up by myself. I picked cotton. I've put in that sticky stuff called tobacco. And I've raised hogs, okay.

And so I, mom and dad, well, hard workers never had any money. Just hard workers, okay. And, but, but, but the point is here that as, as I was growing up, I was taught or I learned that hard work is what you ought to do.

And we worked and we worked and we worked. And so when I got out and I came to Atlanta, my brother in business, and, and then later in church work, you don't have time to share all that tonight. I, I, I still had that attitude.

[8 : 40] If you work real hard, that's old American dream, you know, if you work real hard. But I found out something in spiritual work along the way. I found out that you can work 25 hours a day, so to speak, and you still can't get anywhere unless God's in it.

There's that spiritual side that we must, that we must look at tonight. And so there's three things, three quick points tonight we've through. And so we asked the question tonight, what does God expect of a Christian?

Now in broad parameters, you can't go into detail. You could be here a month. But what does God expect for us? And I took it out of these two verses here. And first of all, I want to say, and please stay with me on this first one.

First of all, we, we need in our lives and, and, and for God can use us, we must have a Christ-centered life. You're familiar with that term, I'm sure, but let it sink in a bit.

We need a Christ-centered life. Any of you in here in education, public school, any kind of school, teaching, Christian school, any of you have been there, we have something in the philosophy of education called the, the pole of interaction.

[9 : 42] And what that means is any subject we teach, whether it be science or math or whatever, that we hold on the Bible over here with this hand, and we teach it out with the Bible, with our hand on that, that pole of interaction.

In other words, everything we teach has a spiritual perspective to it. Okay? That's sort of like we're talking about for our lives in this point, a Christ-centered education. Everything in our life, everything in our life, we need to hold on to Christ over here on this side.

You know? And you understand that. And so just, just quickly, I don't have time to do much tonight, but just quickly here tonight. First of all, in this verse, it says in here that Christ loved me and gave himself for me.

Now, that's simple. We know that. But how many of us take the time in our lives to sit in there once in a while and think about who God is and who Christ is and what he did for us when he left heaven?

I can't conceive of it, folks. You may get, yeah, I can't. I can't conceive how a holy, sovereign God would leave heaven tabernacle in the flesh, have people do every kind of thing to him and finally die on the cross because he loved me that much.

[10 : 51] I can't fathom that. But he did, and I sure am glad of it, aren't you? And so we look at this, and I see the first thing that we must do here is realize my God loves me just as much as he does anybody else.

God loves me supremely that he would do those things for me, and he gave himself for me. Now, I'm not going to linger there because of time, but you think of the implications there.

And so I put a little thing out there, my God. I'm glad Jesus is my Savior. I'm glad Jesus is not just a Savior of the world, and he is for his missionaries, I understand that, but he's personal, he's my God.

But also, see, there's not only that part in a Christ-centered life, but he talks about here faith in this verse. He talks about, I'm crucified with Christ, and I live, and yet I have a Christ living in me, and what life which I live in the place.

I live by the faith of the Son of God. And I don't know, I preach sermons sometimes that I think is decent at least. The most important commodity you have perhaps is faith.

[11 : 55] Our whole life is wrapped up in faith. And sometimes we kind of discard that and don't think about that too much, but our faith. Anyway, and so I trusted Christ by faith, and guess what?

I'm going to heaven by that faith. Okay? So faith means a long time to me. And so I have faith in my God, but then we get down to the real part of the verse here. Paul said, I am crucified.

Now, stick with me a minute, because Romans 6 says that the old man's been crucified, and so we don't serve sin because of that. And there's a little note I have in my notes, put on the mind of Christ.

Because if you crucify self, it's going to happen up here. Tragically, a lot of Baptists don't use their mind very well. Scientists tell us that we use about 10% of our brain.

Now, I don't know how much Adam used, but he named all the animals and everything, so he must use more than we do. But we need to understand, because most of our problems in life, and most of our things that we spend so much time on trying to get around is, it's because of what's up here.

[13 : 05] You know, think right, you know. Think right, and most times things will be right. You know, we have some involuntary actions, but most things we do with our members is because we thought about them.

Amen? And so Paul said, I'm crucified. That's a mental thing. I'm crucified with Christ, he says here. And so we see that crucifixion there, it put on the mind of Christ, and then because the power of sin is broken.

Now, the last in this Christ-centered life I want you to see here, and I'm driving to a point, is my attitude or my philosophy of life. I don't know if you know it or not, but I still, at 77, I still deal with millennials every once in a while.

I told the first meeting I had down at Lighthouse a while back, the first meeting I had with them, I had about 20 of them, and I said, this purpose is for me to get in your mind. And I said, I'm already afraid.

You know, millennials don't think like a 70-year-old guy does, okay? It's a little different, but they're the hope of the future. I don't know how many of you are millennials, because millennials, we're not another generation knowing what they're called.

[14 : 07] But we have a different thinking process, you know? But it doesn't mean they're bad. It doesn't mean anything wrong with them, and you're here, it doesn't mean anything wrong with you. It's just we need to learn how to relate and communicate, okay?

But what it's getting at, I deal with some of those, and I have a granddaughter graduating from secular college right about now, next week or so, and she has been deluged over four years with philosophy courses.

You know, all kind of philosophies in the world. I just figured out one day, listen, my philosophy is whatever the Bible's philosophy is. I don't have to think about whether they're Democrat or Republicans or Libertarians or whatever they are in social issues, because I'm just whoever the Bible is, okay?

Now, what I'm driving at here is all these things I'm talking about here makes us in here, and do you remember what I said growing up, that the fact of the matter, I thought work would get you there, it won't get you there, say, is what I said without the other spiritual factor in there.

And so, first of all, we try to do things and work for God sometimes out there for results. I'm results-oriented. I admit it, okay?

[15 : 19] And in my early days of preaching, I had this bold thing, I said to the pulpit, I said, don't call in, crawl in. Well, a few years ago, I broke my femur, leg bone, and I was out of the pulpit, this is after I was holding it down at Lighthouse, okay?

And so, I'd said that down there, it's what I used to say, and I missed two Sundays. And this guy, some of you remember, it's been in our conferences, he's the big around guy named Frank that spends the money on people.

It might have taken you out before, okay, if you were down there. And he said, well, preacher, he's a friend of mine, by the way, he said, now, preacher, remember what you said? He said, you've been out two Sundays, why didn't you crawl in?

So, I said, one for you, all right? But, but, but what I'm saying, say this is because I finally realized the inward man has to be right when we're going to much for God.

Are you with me? We try to do things sometimes, but the inward man is not what it ought to be. We've not put on the mind of Christ. We're not, we're not doing what we do. We're not praying.

[16 : 28] We're not studying our Bible. We're not this kind of thing. And preachers, by the way, missionaries are my heroes. I want you to know that, okay? When I was growing up, I had baseball heroes.

But missionaries are my heroes. Have been for years, our heroes. And, and, and so, even, even preachers, missionary preachers, can sometimes get stale where they're trying to accomplish because they neglect the inner man.

Now, once we've got that nailed down, there's a word I want you to remember there, availability. Availability. Availability. We must be available because someone said the best ability is availability and that still carries weight, okay?

But very quickly, the second thing out of that same verse is not only a Christ-centered light to make us available, but the second is a Holy Spirit-led life, okay, for direction.

John 16 and, and, and, and seven and on up talks about the Holy Spirit telling the disciples He will improve the world, but in, in seven, in 16 and 13, the Bible says, He will guide you. Now, listen, a guide must have followers, okay?

[17 : 34] And, and, and what we find out is, is, of course, repentance means a change of mind, but when we're, after we're saved and we'll do something for God, which all ought to want to do, then we must follow where the Holy Spirit leads us.

Now, watch me. If He's going over there, we must follow Him. We're not to take one step here and go off over here for a while and then go back and follow Him and go off here a little while.

You'll never get anything done that way, okay? You, you, you, you got to have a life that is Christ-centered, but is Holy Spirit, Holy Spirit led. He says, there's 14 of John 16, He will glorify me, Jesus said.

So our lives are to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, here's the point about it, though. When I'm right to, delete, to follow the Holy Spirit and I follow Him, I think about this one, energized.

Now, at 77, my get up and go, it's largely got up and gone, okay? That's an old saying, you, young people realize that one of these days, okay?

[18 : 37] I like that little energizer bunny, you know, it just keeps on going, you know, but I can't find any batteries to put in. And so, I don't, I can't do that, but, but the fact of the matter is that, that we're energized, the Holy Spirit energizes us.

Are you with me? And, Matthew 20 and 18, around here, you're familiar with, all power, Jesus said, is given in me in heaven and earth. And the Holy Spirit is the action agent person of the Godhead, okay?

He makes things happen. He energizes, and we try to get energized by so many different things, right? You know, we can take a, we can pop an upper in, or, you know, whatever.

And, but the best to do God's work is to be energized by the Holy Spirit of God, you know? It's to just really, really get in there and get with us and make us be what we ought to be.

My, my life verse is Romans 1 16. The power of God unto salvation is what the gospel is, see? And, and, and, and, you know, and so, I wish I could, this middle of time here, I can't deny it, but we're talking about a Christ-centered life and a Holy Spirit-led life, okay?

[19 : 52] Now, the power of God. Now, where we're at now, so far, is we got our life okay, we're really Christ-centered, and now we are following the Holy Spirit. Now, because of that, when we get there then, thirdly, is the grace-directed life.

I don't know what you think about it, but I can tell you tonight, you'll never do anything of a God except by grace. And, and I don't want to hurt your feelings tonight, but you're not worth much.

I'm not worth anything, you're not worth much, you know? But in the eyes of God, you are worth something. But on our own, we're not worth much. Believe it or not, when I was growing up, in the science class, the basic elements of a, of a, of a 160-pound man was 98 cents.

We used to use that sometime. Now, I have no idea what it is. You may be worth a dollar now. No, it'd be more than that. But, but you know, think about that. And, and when we get down to that point, we realize that, okay, so grace-directed life, what does that mean?

It is using our abilities and our gifts to do the Word of God. Now, can I back up just a moment and not spend, every person in here tonight, if you're saved, and maybe somebody that was here tonight is not saved.

[21 : 08] That'd be a great night to get, get saved, you know. And I'm sure, I'm sure you've been coming here very long, and you know how to get saved, okay. But, every Christian should want to do something for God.

That ought to be something inside of us that every honest Christian that, that has the Holy Spirit in him should want to do something for God because he's done so much for me. Okay. And, and realize, man, and there's two, there's two areas there.

We are all born with some kind of basic abilities. You know, your DNA and your RNA and all that stuff. You have certain traits and certain things from your forefathers and foremothers come back down here, you know, that there, you have, you can do certain things somebody else can't do.

Okay. I mean, somebody can even sing. And, one of my good church members from years ago, one of the founders, actually Liberty, one of our founders, her husband, and I had him in the congregation one time, we were singing congregation and she leaned up and she said, don't let me catch you singing again.

My, my, some of you may, my long time associate, Roger Prilhart, he'd say, we need choir members. And, I'd raise my hand and be on the platform. He'd say, not you preacher.

[22 : 24] You know. And so, you know, but somebody can sing. I can't sing a lick. Except in the shower. I'm pretty good sometimes. Okay. But, but listen, do, do things, that's your abilities.

That's the inherent ability you have. You need to use it. But then the Bible teaches, and I guess this is true, I've heard it all my life, that God gives every Christian at least one spiritual gift.

And maybe more of you ask for it, the Bible says. But it's not something you were born with, but it's something God says, I'm going to give you and I'm giving you to for a person, not so you can gloat about it. So, if you can sing, don't come to me gloating about it.

Okay. You know, that's not innate, perhaps, maybe. But, God gives us gifts that we can use it for His work. Okay. It's not used, just sit around with it.

It's to be used for His work. And so, some things, I see that, do something for God. And this is where we get to that verse now. Look at me for just a quick, I've got five minutes and I fudge you, I might have six.

[23 : 27] Verse 21, look at it please. Now, the great apostle Paul is writing this under inspiration. If the great apostle Paul, probably outside Christ, the greatest living Christian missionary in the New Testament, look at what he says.

When he came to his senses and all this, when he writes, I do not frustrate the grace of God. Think about that a moment. We all know verse 20, but we don't much study on verse 21.

I do not frustrate, Paul said, the grace of God. I'm going to tell you, a lot of times I have. For about five years, I didn't know this, but looking back for about five years, God was calling me into ministry.

You know, five years or so. I was doing the work. I was a bus captain. I was a deacon. I was doing everything. I worked sometimes at four o'clock on Saturday and get off and run my bus route. You know, whatever.

I was busy in the work. And so I said, Lord, you know what? I got one boy. I said, I'll raise him to where he can be the preacher. He didn't even listen to me.

[24 : 43] No, it's not him I want. I want you. Well, I come out of the country. I wanted a new house and a new car and all those kind of things, okay? You know? But that desire left me because I became an independent Baptist preacher.

You know? But the frustration here. Many of us frustrate the grace of God. The grace of God wants to take your ability and take your spiritual gifts and the grace of God wants you to do something with it.

Okay? And a lot of times we frustrate that because we say, no, well, this and that and the other, you know, and grandma and grandpa don't want to take the kids off to a foreign country somewhere and I've been through all that, okay?

And this kind of thing, and I'm not minimized because I am now grandpa, you know? And, but what I'm saying is, I hope you get the idea that I'm going to Romans in a minute and just mention and we'll be through, okay?

But those three things out of those two verses, if we're going to do anything from God and God's respects us, first of all, have a Christ-centered life. We went through that, okay? A Christ-centered, we hold on, with everything we do, we hold on to that pole of interaction which is Christ.

[25 : 52] Okay? Number two, we must have a Holy Spirit-led life. He's our guide. He's our teacher. We must follow Him, not somebody else. We've got too many independent Baptist gurus.

Now, I say this in jest, Brother Gardner, step back in. Some of our gurus of days gone by, I think God's kind of moved some of them off the scene because the local church, God has given responsibility.

I don't have to pick up the phone on Monday morning and say, well, you know, what do you think I did? Am I okay? Because some guru didn't call me to preach. Say, are you with me?

Now, I'm not saying, are you pastors there? I mean, I'm not saying any of that at all. I'm simply saying here that we're the usual way. We don't frustrate the grace of God. We do what God wants to do out of, well, God is going to give us grace.

Now, be real quick because time is out. If you will, turn with me to the book of Romans. And you guys, I'm sure you may already have this. I don't know if it's mine or not. I make new sermons.

[26 : 58] I steal some new sermons. I mean, you know, wherever I can get them from, okay, that I think they'd be good. But, but, but, but they're going to say the same thing that I preach in chapter 12.

You're familiar with the verses, okay? But, I beseech you there, brother, by mercies of God, you present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God, which is a reasonable service. Be not conformed to this world, but you're transformed by the new and of your mind that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Now, in actuality, it says the same thing, but this is a great sermon to preach. Even if I do say so. In Romans, in those two, three verses, you have the motivation for serving God by the mercies of God.

That's the same thing as we said in the beginning here, what all God's done for us and what God can do. The motivation, the motivation is there and, and, and the word, the transformation here, back up a little bit, turn around.

Did you know that transformation is not always, like in this verse, salvation? Because when you get saved, you grow. Your mind transforms. Your life transforms.

[28 : 02] Okay? And so, so we're, and then the third is, is the one I want is presentation. Present yourself. And I submit to you tonight that, that our Christ-centered life, our Holy Spirit-led life, our grace-directed life, is kind of no fruition unless we present ourselves.

We come before the Lord and say, Lord, and Isaiah said it years ago, Lord, here am I. You may not say, send me. You may say, use me. You may say, whatever it is. But, but, but Lord, I'm ready now and you present yourself to the Lord.

At Christmas time, I preach sometime that what can you give God? He don't need anything. Don't need a new car. Don't need a new house. God need anything. Only thing God wants, wrap yourself up and put that gift on the altar.

That's what God wants. That's what God wants. So, I hope tonight, we may have hit a couple of things tonight that, that might help you in understanding if you're to one of those points somewhere along the line that you really need to, you really need to get yourself fixed up to where, to where you understand that I need, I need Christ as a central point in my life.

Okay? If you have to give up to something else, give it up. I've been there, okay? Give it up. You'll be happier when you give it up. Christ-centered life. And then follow the Holy Spirit in your life because He's going to take you where God wants you to go.

[29 : 24] Okay? And the third thing is grace is going to provide a way for you to use your gifts and your abilities that you have. Okay? But until we get those in order, if we just try for results only without the inward man being like it ought to be, we're going to fall flat on our face sometimes.

And the third thing is being said to weave, that's going to happen to me, the other thing is to offer fire. And let's see that, as I think, I think, the other thing, is starting to rule and which go out in you that's something you mayagen moves