



Ministry in the Will of God Part 3

March 8, 2026

Romans 15:22-33

(Video 47:20)

You want to turn in your bibles, once again, on this beautiful, beautiful Lord's day, to Romans 15. Romans 15, and you know for the last couple of weeks, and again today, we've been highlighting verses 22 through 33, which, as I've said over and over again, appears on the surface to be a loosely disconnected series of statements about Paul's future plans and heart's desires and wishes and wants and so forth. And of course, we've pointed out the fact that while many passages of Scripture, perhaps most, are explicit, I should say, in their teaching principles, this is one of those passages, that is not explicit but is implicit. And we've been mining some of the wonderful truth that is located in these verses of Scripture. Paul has indicated that he wants to minister in accordance with the will of God. He desires to live his entire life in accordance with the will of God. And as you and I both know, we're all ministers. We all have a ministry of reconciliation to the lost. We all have a ministry of encouragement to those inside the family of God. Those are our commands. Those are our mandates. That's why the Lord saved our soul to begin with, to give Him glory by walking in all of those good works He's foreordained beforehand. And actually, you don't have to necessarily think of one particular aspect of ministering the Word of God in someone's life as ministry. Your entire life is to be a ministry. We're to present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God. And so forth. And we have unpacked that over and over again. But how do I know if I'm living life? How do I know if I'm ministering my life? How do I know if I'm in particular ministering the Word of God? How do I know if I'm in particular even using some area of my life where I've been given certain natural gifts and talents and I've been given certain spiritual gifts and talents and am using them directly in the center of God's will so that God gets the greatest



glory and I get the greatest blessing? Well, in this passage of Scripture, Paul gives us various character qualities that not explicitly but implicitly come out of the text. Character qualities, characteristics, circumstances, if you will, situations, if you will, that in our life that let us know we're ministering in the will of God. Circumstances or character qualities or attitudes that we need to develop to make sure we're ministering in the will of God. And therefore, it's a very important passage of Scripture for that reason.

We saw in verses 20 and 21 that any ministry that is in the will of God is a ministry that must have precision. It must be focused. You can't be all things to all people. No believer can be, no church can be, no ministry organization or parachurch group can be. You have to have focus. If you try to do everything, you may do a bunch of things well, but you'll end up doing nothing excellently. And you won't sense God's good pleasure to the max that you will unless you're using the gifts and the talents with the focus that Almighty God desired. And we use Jesus, obviously, as the prime example of that. The one we're to be conformed to. He literally had a narrow focus, a narrow period of time, a narrow geographical area, a narrow message, the gospel of Christ, a narrow time in which to do it, dealt with a narrow, if you will, limited group of people in which to accomplish it. And yet, on the cross, He says, it is finished. He says, hours before the cross, Father, I have fulfilled all that you've given me to do. And that's exactly what you and I want to always do. And it starts out by being focused. And we said that a part of being focused and having precision, praying about what you sense gives God, where you sense God's good pleasure on your life.

A second principle that comes through from this passage of Scripture was right there in Romans 15, verse 22. He says, ***For this reason***, because He had to stay and minister in a certain area to the Gentiles, to which he was called, that specific focus of his ministry, he says, ***For this reason***, verse 22, ***I have often been hindered from coming to you***; And we use verse



22 as a jumping point to say, what do you mean, hindered? He was stopped in various ways from coming to them. And we underscored the point that one who ministers in the will of God must constantly be trusting in the providence of God, the fact that God is sovereign over all of the affairs of life. And remember, we said that word *hindered* means to like cut a trench, like a moat around a castle. God in many ways causes circumstances to cut a trench, to stop us from going one way and stop us from ministering a certain way or to a certain people in a certain ministry at a certain time, to direct us in another way for His ultimate good purposes. There's three aspects, by the way, in wanting to minister in the will of God. There's three dimensions, if you will, to the will of God. And I wanted to set those up for you, at least to cement them in your mind a little bit this morning.

- One is the sovereign will of God, clearly expressed in Scripture. It's the order of world events. It's the order of time. It's the where God is going in time, space, dimension, history, and so forth. It is all laid out in the Word of God, the sovereign will of God.
- Another aspect of the will of God is the moral will of God, you know, expressed most obviously in the Ten Commandments. That's also set forth in Scripture. The sovereign will of God is always going to be accomplished. The moral will of God may or may not be accomplished in your life to the extent that you and I are obedient to it; do this, do that, don't do this, don't do that, etc., honor your father and your mother, don't have false gods before Me, don't commit adultery, don't lie, you know, and so forth. And so, that's the moral will of God. It's also expressed in Scripture.
- And a third aspect of the will of God is what we might call the personal will of God for your life and for mine. And that is not expressly laid out in Scripture. That is where you and I, through prayer, through time in the Word of God, through listening to the promptings of the Spirit of God, through trusting in the providence of God, to sensing



the good pleasure of God, and all of the things that we're talking about as signs that you're in the will of God, is the way God works in your life to direct you in doing these things.

And so, we've hit on precision, having a focus in your life and ministry. We've hit on trusting in the providence of God, in discerning the will of God. But I wanted today to get to a third point. It's in verses 23 and 24. And it's really key that you understand this. Trusting and relying in the providence of God is not an excuse not to plan, to have poor planning. You know, people sit back and say, "Well, I'm just going to wait until God works it out." That's an excuse for laziness. He says in verses 23 and 24, but now, ***but now, with no further place for me in these regions***, we're going to come back to that, ***and since I have had for many years***, get this, ***a longing to come to you...*** He had a longing. He had a desire. He had a plan. He wanted to come to these people in Rome, ***...whenever I go to Spain...***, in other words, what was his plan? When I go to Spain, I want to first come to you guys, all right, there in Rome, ***...for I hope to see you***, verse 24, ***in passing, and to be helped on my way there by you when I have first enjoyed your company for a while***. Stop right there. It doesn't explicitly say, I have a plan. But you can't read those verses of Scripture without seeing, implicitly, he clearly has a plan, which God, through the speaking through the Spirit, allows him to share, okay? Get this: You will be more aware of God's providence working in your life, you'll be more attuned to God's hand of direction in your life when you have a plan. You know why? Because you see God alter your plans. And you'll say, oh, and you're more sensitive and aware to what He is doing in your life. There's a genuine peace, a comfort, a faith-building strength that comes from knowing God is providentially ordering circumstances in your life. There are no accidents. But having a plan, let all things be done decently and in good order. Trying to think it through prayerfully and having a plan, when you do that, the providence of God becomes more and



more aware. He says, but now I've been hindered. Waiting on the providence of God, again, does not preclude planning. You may want to write down 1 Thessalonians 2:17-18. I'm going to read it for you. 1 Thessalonians 2:17-18 says this. ***But we, brethren, having been taken away from you for a short while***, Paul is writing to the Thessalonians, and he says, you know, we've been without your company for a short while. He says, but we, brethren, having been bereft of you for a short while, ***in person, not in spirit***, we haven't been able to be with you. He says, ***were all the more eager with great desire to see your face***. We had a plan. We were all the more eager with great desire to see your face. We really wanted to come to you. Verse 18 of 1 Thessalonians 2:18. ***For we wanted to come to you***, there's the plan, ***I, Paul, more than once, and yet Satan hindered us***. He was aware because he had a plan that God had altered his plans. Well, no, wait a minute. It says, Satan thwarted me. Again, I want to underscore that point. Remember what Martin Luther said. Satan, definitely, he's the devil, but he's God's devil. Satan doesn't do anything to you that is not first passed through the hands of a loving God. Romans 1:13, you may remember. ***I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I purposed to come to you, (but was prevented thus far) so order that I might have some fruit***. That he means ***among you***. It means souls, Gentiles, and so forth. He had a plan.

Providence does not preclude planning, friends, it is part of it. Where would you go for that, really? Okay, you're sort of giving us the implicit. Give us some explicit, John. Okay. Proverbs 16:9 ***The mind of man plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps***. There it is. But you're supposed to lay out a plan, then God in His providence will direct your steps. Proverbs 21:5. ***The plans of the diligent lead surely to advantage***. You're supposed to plan. Proverbs 21:31. ***The horse is prepared for the day of battle***, that's the plan. ***The horse is prepared for the day of battle, but victory comes from the Lord***. By the way, do you think the United



States military planned before they went to Iran? You've got to be kidding me. It's unbelievable if you look at some of the videos and some of the things and follow some of the news accounts of the incredible, incredible plan that went into it. But never forget this, believer: Victory, if it is to come, comes from the Lord. It comes from the Lord in your life, in your church's life, in your nation's life. Any kind of victory comes from God. 2 Samuel 10:12. What's it say? ***Be strong, and let us show ourselves courageous for the sake of our people and for the cities of our God; And may the LORD do what is good in His sight.*** We've got a battle plan, you Israelis. We've got a battle plan. Going to go in and take on these Philistines. And God, we will trust in God to work it out. What did the Lord Jesus Christ Himself? Luke 14:28 and 31. ***For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not sit down and calculate the cost to see if he has enough to complete it? Verse 31. Or what king, when he sets out to meet another king in battle, will not first sit down and take counsel whether he is strong enough with 10,000 men to encounter the one coming against him with 20,000?*** You've got to plan.

By the way, this is James 4:13-15. Doesn't say don't plan. You need to get these verses right. James 4:13-15. ***Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow, we shall go to such and such a city and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit." Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You're just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away.*** Oh, well, if that's the case, I won't plan. No. He doesn't say don't plan. What he goes on and says is, ***Instead, you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that."*** The point is: You make a plan and that plan works within the providence of God. And you will sense more and more of God's providence in your life if you've got a blueprint that you believe God has laid on your heart to follow and direct. It is really a powerful truth.



You know, the other thing I didn't want to miss in passing, too, back in Romans 15, there's so much truth when you get into unpacking this, you realize this is just no random section of Scripture. In verse 23, I underscored that point. He says, ***but now, with no further place for me in these regions***. What's he mean there? He's completed it. There's no more work for him to do. Does that mean that everybody there has already come to know Christ? Does that mean that everybody's as mature in Christ as they could possibly be? No. What he's saying is, my call was to primarily go to the Gentiles. My call was to evangelize. My call was to go out, lead people to Christ, establish churches, get them going, getting them populated, and then go on and on and on. That's my primary ministry focus. So now, what's he saying? I have done everything in this area, if you will, that I've been called upon to do in that precise focus of my ministry. In other words, another way of saying is that, since this aspect of my ministry is thoroughly covered, I can go on. I love that. And what I love about that is this: He wasn't going to move on until the work where he was, was completely done. That is a great, great principle.

You've heard me say this over and over and over again. It encouraged my heart greatly this week. There's some empty seats in here. Sure, we'd love to have them all filled. But I never worry about the empty seats. I worry about the seats that are filled. I care about you. Long time ago, and it wasn't original with me, I remember a guy saying, I've never forgotten it, all you need to do as a pastor is worry about the depth of your ministry. God will take care of the breadth. I heard, actually, John MacArthur say that one time. He said, you know, he told me personally. He said, you know, it was L.A. And at a time in Los Angeles, in a major city in the United States with all this talent, all this other stuff. He said, had I taken a church in, you know, Montana somewhere, he said, you know, I would have been ministering to 300 people or 100 people or 50 people and not, you know, 20-some thousand Sundays in and Sunday out. Just take care of the... in other words, what? Be thorough. Be complete. Be faithful with whatever



talents God has given you. Whatever place he's called you to minister. Bloom where you're planted and literally get it done. Be faithful where you are called. And to do it, Paul had been 15 years, if you go back and trace, he's been 15 years in the Jerusalem environs and then to Macedonia and Achaia and Greece and Illyricum and all this area around the Mediterranean area. He wants to get to Rome and he ultimately wants to get past Rome and get to Spain. By the way, why Spain? Because Spain was the, you couldn't go any farther. Portugal was a part of Spain then. You couldn't go any farther. That was the end of the known world to him at that time, okay? So he wants to get that gospel out to the end of the known world in that direction. Why didn't he go to Asia? Remember the Macedonian call? He had that vision we saw back in Acts. And he was going to go to the east and he said, no, no, no, God says I want you to go west. And so he wants to go as far west as he can go. He wants to go that way. But before he went there, as much as that was his burning desire to keep on going, he has spent about 15 years in this area around the Mediterranean getting churches established and getting the job done. And I love the point there. Paul set duty before desire.

You got to have a plan. You want to follow that plan. But a part of that plan has to be finish the duty you've got right now where you are before you go on. Verse 24 there, it says, I want **to be helped on my way there**. The word help there, *propempō* (G 4311). It's a technical term. It's not a general word. It's a technical term and it's used strictly to define the ancient custom in the early church of furnishing an escort and furnishing food and protection and safety and financial support. We would call it today when somebody is going to go out on the mission field, they're deputized, or they go through their preparation work to be ordained or deputized or sent out from a church for ministry. And that's the word he's sort of using there. He says, I want to come see you guys. I want to be fresh and be refreshed with your fellowship and so forth. But quite frankly, I want you guys to help me financially and otherwise in getting



the gospel off to Spain. And that's what he's talking about here. So, that is huge, huge. The fact that he literally wants to deal with this, his main thing.

And that leads to literally, not only blooming where you're planted, but something else that is so important when it comes to ministry in the will of God. It's the fourth P, if you will, on the alliteration that we're using, and it's priority. You need to prioritize. Yes, be focused, but even within that focus of where you're going to minister, even trusting in the providence of Almighty God, even recognizing all of that and recognizing the fact that you need to plan, you also, as a part of that planning, need to prioritize. Plans and dreams for the future. Listen to me now. Plans and dreams for the future and what you believe God wants you to do with your life and with your ministry is great, but never, ever let them choke off the priority of the present, the priority of what God would have you do at the present time.

The late Dr. Jack MacArthur said to me one time, he said, in all my years of ministry, he says, I've learned one thing, John. If a man in ministry, a man in your church or wherever, if that man resigns, let him go immediately. He said, once his heart has gone somewhere else, his effectiveness will be gone as well. And it's so very true. The test of a man's heart in ministry is can he set aside maybe a bigger dream in order to do the menial, the necessary, the thing that has the most priority right now in the moment.

And you say, well, what, where are you getting all this? Paul's calling was to take the gospel as far as he could to all of the Gentiles, okay? Now, he literally has been given a charge when he was ordained. Let's do this this way. Flip over to the book of Galatians, the book of Galatians 2. Go to the book of Galatians and we're going to see Paul. Let me make sure I give you the right chapter. In Galatians 2, yes. Go to Galatians 2:7-10. I want you to see what's, and by the way, this pops up in 1 Corinthians 8 or 9. It pops up in several other places. And you'll



know when he's writing all these letters to all these people and he's going on his three different missionary journeys and he's doing this for 20 some years, he keeps bringing up money and collection. I want you to see what's going on. In Galatians 2:7, this is really where Paul was ordained, if you will, by the Jerusalem church to go to the Gentiles. Verse 7, ***But on the contrary, seeing that I, Paul, had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised,*** meaning to the Gentiles, ***just as Peter had been to the circumcised,*** meaning to the Jews, ***(for he who effectually worked for Peter in his apostleship for the Jews, the circumcised, effectually worked for me also to the Gentiles).*** He's talking about Almighty God, God who laid on Peter's heart to minister directly, primarily to his fellow Jews. God laid upon me, a Jew as well, Paul says, but to go to the Gentiles, all right? Verse 9, ***and recognizing the grace that had been given to me, James and Cephas (Peter) and John,*** that's James, Peter, and John. These are the three elders, the pillars, if you will, of the Jerusalem church at the time, ***who were reputed to be the pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship.*** This is his ordination ceremony. This is Paul being deputized from the Jerusalem church, primarily Jews, to go take his ministry to the Gentiles formally, that God had laid on his heart, gave the ***right hand of fellowship that we might go to the Gentiles and they,*** the rest of them, ***to the circumcised.*** to the Jews, all right? But ***They only ask us,*** here we go, ***to remember the poor - the very thing I also was eager to do.*** What has that got to do with anything? What do you mean, *remember the poor?* Remember the day of Pentecost. All of these people, thousands of people are crowded into Jerusalem for the high holy days, all right? For the Passover and all of that. And what happens? Obviously, the crucifixion takes place. Peter stands up, preaches the first sermon, 3,000 people on the first day. All of these people who've come in are, all these Jews and Jewish proselytes, but mostly Jews, are converted to belief in their Messiah, Christ. And a lot of them stay. So now, you got all these people jammed around the environs



of Jerusalem for months and years, okay? And then also, the scriptures tell us that a famine hit the area at that time. So you got a whole bunch of people, they don't have homes, they're staying with other people, they don't have jobs, if you will. Famine comes, there's a food shortage. Now you've got persecution that breaks out because of the fact that they've become Christians and are seen as traitors to Judaism. So a lot of them lose their houses, lose their jobs, and so forth. So the Jerusalem church and the believers around Jerusalem in these first 10 or 15, 20 years of Paul's ministry are a highly impoverished group of believers. And when they deputize Paul and they send him out to be an apostle to the Gentiles, they say, go. But whatever you do, don't forget the poor. Don't forget the poor Jewish brethren around here as you're doing this. And Paul says, and it had already, he says, been laid upon my heart. So what? So when you read through Corinthians and Galatians and the book of Acts and so forth, you see about Paul and the money and joining me and so on. He's everywhere he goes in taking the gospel to the Gentiles, he's also raising funds. He's collecting monies to take back with him to this poor church in the Jerusalem area, to the Jewish church back there, the Jewish believers. That's what he means when he says down in verse 26, and 1 Corinthians 8 and 9 points this out. Remember, and the book of Acts points out, the Macedonians in their own poverty, it says they gave liberally to support. It wasn't just to support Paul when he was going door to door, city to city, spreading the gospel. It was also this collection he was taking up to help the poor believers, the Jewish believers back in Jerusalem. That's what he's saying here in verse 26 and 27, ***For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem.*** And look what he says, ***Yes, they were pleased to do so, and they are indebted to them...*** These Gentile believers in Greece who've come to know Christ have given this money and this collection for me to take back to their Jewish brethren, and he says they're pleased to do so, and they should do so. Why?



Because they're indebted to them. In what way? ***For if the Gentiles have shared in their spiritual things***, the Gentiles, we're the goyim. We got grafted into this Jewish thing, if you will. Christianity, if you will, in the first instance, is an outgrowth of Judaism, if you will. We are allowed to be a part of the spiritual family of God, even though we don't have the natural Jewish heritage. Why? We're grafted into the lineage of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob by faith in a Jewish Messiah, if you will. That's, you know, Romans 4 and so forth. So what's he say? Look, God in His wonderful grace and providence has used the Jew to be the oracle of His truth, to be the light of the gospel of Christ. It's been brought to you Gentiles. You're now a part of the family of God with them. And since God in His graciousness has allowed you and me as the goyim to share in such spiritual blessings, it's only right and natural and appropriate that we would want to take our material things, our financial wealth, and give back to them to help them out. And the mere fact that it's a debt and an obligation doesn't mean that it isn't done in an act of love. And so that's what he's talking about here. And he'd never forgotten that commitment that he made to help out these poor, impoverished Jewish believers.

And by the way, when Paul ultimately goes back to Jerusalem to give them that gift, he doesn't just take the money, but he also takes a bunch of Gentiles with him. And what does that do? Those first initial Jewish converts, when they come to know Christ, remember you go through the book of Acts, Acts 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, and you realize they struggled with the fact, you mean Gentiles can be a part of this thing? Here, we've come to know the Messiah, we get it, and you mean Gentiles are really... and they struggled. Some of them, the Judaizers came along and said, well, Gentiles can be involved in this, but they have to become Jews first, and then they become followers of Christ. And remember, that's the whole book of Galatians. No, no, no, no, no. That is absolutely wrong. And so they struggled with whether or not Gentiles could be a part of this thing. And what happens? They get tangible confirmation of the power of God has



even saved the souls of the Gentiles through the Messiah. Why? Because Gentiles who hate Jews, and the Jews who hated the Gentiles, I'm talking about, obviously, the prejudice beforehand. Well, Gentiles are giving us money? Yeah, because we're all part of the family of God. Because we're... and it was confirmation to those early Jews that the Gentiles were a part of this as well.

The other thing it did is all the way through Paul's writings, he's constantly hammering it, unity in the body of Christ, unity in the body of Christ. Boy, if we're going to evangelize the world, we need to make sure that we ourselves, as the base church, who know the truth, we need to be united. No divisions. What's he say? There's no longer bond or free. There's no longer male or female. We're all one in Christ. There's no Jew or Gentile. He writes in the book of Ephesians, the wall of partition has been broken down. This offering, this tangible gift, was a way of not only demonstrating to the Jews, the Gentiles are a part of this but also getting the Jews and the Gentiles working together, realizing that this is all about the glory of God. This has got nothing to do with our physical heritage or lineage. It has nothing to do with being physically born a Jew or physically born a Gentile. It has everything to do with being born again, being born into the family of God. And so that's what's running through all this.

Now, what's this got to do with ministering in the will of God and making sure that your priorities are right? His priority was to make sure that that gift, that collection was taken, that he didn't forget the poor back there. So what's his heart's desire? My heart's desire, my heart's desire is to evangelize, to take ground for Christ. I want to get to Rome. I want to get to Spain. I want to plant more churches. I want to do what God has absolutely called me and laid on my heart to do. But I'm never going to let the bigger dream, I'm never going to let the bigger plan choke out my doing what I'm obligated to do now where I am. Okay, and that's why he says, I've been wanting to come to you, and but what's he say, verse 25, ***but now, I'm going to***



Jerusalem serving the saints, verse 25. Wait a minute, he wants to go where he is there in Greece, Macedonia, he wants to go to Rome and to Spain, he wants to go west, go west, young man, but what's he say? But now I'm going a thousand miles in the other direction, I'm going to Jerusalem because I have to finish what is the first priority right now where I am before I can go ahead and fulfill this greater dream or vision.

What's the point? I'll tell you what the point is. Point is clearly this. So many people, I see it, by the way, in young men, like maybe a Trey Yarwood. Well, I see it in a good sense in him, but I see the mistake in many others. Men want to expand, women want to expand, some area of ministry, a broader type of ministry, but they neglect the main priority that God has laid on their life where they are right now. I want to go to Thailand and take Thailand for Christ. Yes, but you just graduated from college, and you've got a wife and two young kids, and you've got a bunch of college debt, and you cannot, it's absolutely not the first priority to be running off to Thailand when you've got a stewardship responsibility, young children to be nurtured, when you've got a financial debt that needs to be addressed, and you've got things, you may be 10 or 12 or 15 years before you ever get to Thailand, if that's where God wants you to go. Make sure you take care of the first priority where you are now. It happens a lot. People have a big vision for Christ, and they don't deal with what they need to deal with where they are now.

So, interesting, by the way, in verse 26, in case you see me flipping around, I'm flipping around because I am all over the lot on this, but I hope there's a certain cohesiveness to it all, but in verse 26, **for Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make a contribution for the poor**. The word *contribution*, I was surprised when I checked out this word. Do you know what it is, Bob? *Koinōnia* (G 2842). We get the word fellowship from it. He uses the word *koinōnia*, fellowship, and it's translated in various passages where he asks for money in



supporting this effort as a contribution. And when you think about it, that's exactly the offering we took earlier today, that when we gave our offering, that financial gifts to the church and the ministry of this church, that's a part of our fellowship. It's a part of our mutual, communal living. And I never, I just thought it was neat that he used that particular word, that common sharing.

The thing that I want to close, close the last few minutes that we have right now, and I'll pick up with this Lord willing next week, is he look at what he says at verse 29. This is so, so good. He says, I know that when I come to you, I want to come to you. I'm planning to come to you. I've been wanting to come to you for 15 years. I've been hindered. And guess what? Even though I still want to come to you, and I want you to help me out as I go on from Rome to Spain. For now, I'm going a thousand miles in the other direction to Jerusalem to give these people this money that I've been going around collecting all this period of time, because that's my main priority right now in the midst of my overall plan to come to you. But look what he says in verse 29. ***And I know that when I do come to you***, you believers there in Rome that I'm writing this letter to, ***I will come in the fullness of the blessing of Christ***. Let me tell you what he's saying there. I know that I'll be totally, totally blessed to the max all the way. How can he possibly say that? Because I'll tell you what. There's another aspect of this. He's absolutely being obedient to the word of God. And you will be blessed when you are totally, totally obedient to the word of God. How can he promise that? Because the key to being absolutely blessed in Christ is the obedient life. And Paul, over and over and over again, proved it to be true.

Norman Vincent Peale, Robert Shuler, all the positive thinking, possibility thinking gurus, all the "name it and claim it" cultic heretics. It's not biblical. But I'll tell you what is biblical. It isn't name it and claim it. It's obey the word of God and be blessed. You obey the word of God



and you'll be blessed. A lot of money, a lot of fame, a lot of wealth, great health. No. You'll be blessed in things that are eternal. You'll be blessed in eternal riches forever and ever and ever.

You say, well, how in the world do you know that? Well, let's go with 1 Peter 1:3 and 4. ***Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. According to his great mercy has caused us to be born again, what? to a living hope through the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead.*** And what's he say? ***to obtain an inheritance***, to obtain something of value. You're smiling, Steve. I know you're smiling. You love this passage of scripture. I do too. To obtain an inheritance. What inheritance is he talking about? Health, wealth, money, cars, houses, fame, broader ministry? No. It's an inheritance that's ***imperishable***. Those other things are perishable. So it's an imperishable inheritance. And it's ***undefiled***. Those other things are touched with the world. This is not. ***and will not fade away***. Well, what could he possibly be talking about? He ends the verse with this. ***reserved in heaven, get this, for you.*** For you. 2 Corinthians 5:10. ***For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ*** to receive our rewards for the deeds done in the body. We say it over and over and over again. You talk about the love and the grace of God. He ordains you to salvation before the foundation of the world. He draws you to Himself. He gives you the faith to believe in Him. He saves your soul. Leads you to Christ. Gives you the spirit of God to indwell you. Gives you the desire to will and to work for His good pleasure. He ordains all the good deeds for you to walk in them. Enables you to do so. Gives you the desire to do so. Gives you fruit as a result of doing so. And then when it's all over and done with, you go to heaven and guess what? He rewards you for doing what He did in the first instance. You cannot out give the love of God. He will hold you fast. For your Savior, what? Loves you so. He will hold you fast for that very purpose. 1 Corinthians 3:12 and 14. ***Now if any man builds upon the foundation***, what's the foundation? Faith in Christ. If any man builds upon the foundation, ***with gold, silver, precious***



stones, wood, hay, straw, each man's work will become evident; for the day, what day? The day of the judgment of the Lord Jesus Christ. The day of the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. The day **will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. If any man's work which he has built upon that foundation, Jesus Christ, remains, he shall receive a reward.** We say it over and over and over again. You can't take it with you. But guess what, man? You can send it on ahead. Spiritually speaking. And the things that last for all eternity. And so, the greatest, he says, I am going to be blessed to the max.

By the way, it doesn't mean that the only blessings are to come. When you're obedient in every aspect of the word of God, what, you see the providential working of God in your life. You see God use you to do something for His glory. That encourages your soul and your faith. Let me tell you something. Nothing will encourage you more than when you see yourself more devoted in living to Almighty God. Nothing will encourage your faith more than when you see God use you to be the conduit through which another individual comes to know Christ. Or another believer recognizes an area of sin in their life or senses God's direction and grows in a greater holiness. There's no greater turn-on imaginable.

I love what, I love everything Spurgeon said, but Spurgeon said this, talking about a priority in your life, having priorities in your ministry, dealing right now with what you see. Vernon Benton is over in Master's Seminary and he's got plans for the future, but let me tell you something. Vernon Benton is in the midst of a practicum right now. He's ministering where he is right now. Yeah, it's with the guys to learn how to do ministry better, but he's ministering where he is right now. Trey Yarwood, I mentioned him, Trey Yarwood has some plans to go and do certain things, but Trey Yarwood is ministering, taking ground for Christ on that campus, down at ASU and other venues now. Do what God has called you to do now while



you're planning on the bigger things down the road, or more things, I should say, down the road. Spurgeon says this about priority: *You cannot expect that God should send you forth to conquer and to bring to Him renown when you have not as yet conquered your own personal indolence and disobedience. He that is unfaithful in that which is least will be unfaithful in that which is greater.* (Paul was never going to be effectively used the way God wanted to use him to evangelize the Gentiles if he didn't do what God had also ordered him to do immediately in getting those monies back to that impoverished church in Jerusalem.) *He that is unfaithful in that which is least will be unfaithful in that which is greater. And if you have not kept the master's sayings in the little vineyard of your personal history, how much less shall you be able to do so in a broader scale?* He says this: *If you were sick, would you send for your physician tomorrow? If your house were on fire, would you call fire tomorrow? If you were robbed in the street on your road home, would you cry, Stop! Thief! Tomorrow?* He says *No. But man is foolish in the things concerning his soul. Unless divine and infinite love teach him to number his days* (meaning do it now, obey now) *he will still go on boasting of what he's going to do tomorrow until his soul has been destroyed by them.* Isn't that great? He says the great mischief in most men who mean to do well is procrastination. I'll obey God tomorrow. I'm going to do what God's called me to do right now. Tomorrow. He says the only calendar that has tomorrow in it is the almanac of a fool.

Today is the day of salvation. If you don't know Christ right now today, don't sit here and say, "Well, you know, some of those things John says make sense and Scripture seemed to make sense and you know, I have been needing to repent of my sins and give my heart to Christ and really come to know Jesus as my Lord and Savior for a long time now. I'm going to think about it maybe tomorrow." You know what you're saying? First of all, you don't have tomorrow. You don't know that you have tomorrow. And basically what you're saying is I'm going to



disobey the commands of God for one more day. Same way with believers. When God has given us a task to do and we know what the priority is, for us to procrastinate and put it off and say manana is basically saying I'm going to live in sin for one more day.

There is so much more to this. I hope it was sanctified. I got way off the one direction I was going to go. Lord willing, maybe I'll get it back on what I think is the track. Maybe it stayed on track for you. I don't know. But in any event, Brian, as you come to lead us in this closing hymn, let me close us in a word of prayer.

Father, here is a passage of Scripture with these seemingly disjointed verses and there's such rich practical truth You've put in there for us. It just encourages my own heart to see the richness of every portion of Your word. Father, we absolutely want to be precise. We want to be focused so that we can be most effective in carrying out Your will for each one of our lives to give You the most glory. We know, Father, that that means we are to trust in Your sovereign control. Trust in your providential dealings moment by moment in every area of our life. We know, Father, that it means that we're to plan. That trusting in Your providence doesn't mean not planning. Our plans are to be a part of it and that we will realize your providential workings when we see You adjust our plans. And, Father, within the midst of all of it and all the goals and the dreams that we may have and the things You're laying on our heart to do that may be very legitimate and right and You'll want us to do them. Help us, Father, to always remember to deal with the immediate, to deal with the priority things that need to be addressed now. That we may want to do some great ministry but You've given us elderly parents who have need of our care. And the fourth commandment is clear. Honor your father and your mother. And we can't go to the foreign mission field. We can't teach that extra Sunday school class. We can't take that pulpit. We can't do what we need to do because there's a priority in one of Your moral commands where our elderly parents are involved, or where



tender children are involved or when circumstances of life that You're in control of have caused us to have financial obligations that must be met before we expand or take on a new or a wider ministry role. Father help us to do all things decently and in good order. Help us to order our lives to seek Your will. Help us to continue to learn more and more of these principles that You have in this portion of Your word and use them Father to make us more effective in living lives for Your glory. Knowing that we're in the perfect center of Your will and therefore the recipients of maximum blessings now and most significantly in the life to come. Father this is our prayer this hour. We ask it again in the matchless name of Yourself in the person of Jesus our Christ. Amen and amen.