

NEXT STEPS

WEEK 3

...keep your eye on what you're doing; accept the hard times along with the good;
keep the Message alive; do a thorough job as God's servant.

— 2 TIMOTHY 4:5 (MSG)

Well, you're into the third week of the BASIC Training series. By now you should be taking some NEXT STEPS to help you in your spiritual journey. You can always go back do one of the NEXT STEPS from previous weeks. It's completely up to you. But keep reading, sharing, listening, thinking, and growing.

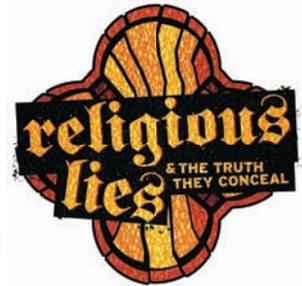


1. THE GREAT CAUSE – PART 5 BY MATT CHANDLER

Listen to this message by Mark Chandler, the pastor of The Village Church in Dallas. You'll find it humorous, but also very challenging when it comes to the topic of living out what you say you believe. You can also read the message. It is included in your articles in this week's NEXT STEPS. You'll find the audio on iTunes at the following link:
<http://itunes.apple.com/WebObjects/MZStore.woa/wa/viewPodcast?i=60008604&id=82014403>

2. START A MEN'S SMALL GROUP FOR THE FALL CAMPAIGN

On Sunday, September 27, we will begin our annual fall all-church spiritual alignment campaign. This year the theme is Religious Lies: And the Truth They Conceal. We will be looking at six subtle lies that sound right, but are a direct attack on God, His Word, His Son, and His plan for the salvation of man. This series will be going right along with our study on what it is we believe and why it isn't making a difference in the way     our lives. So why not consider forming a small group with some other guys and doing this study together? It's only 6 weeks long. If you're interested contact Cody McQueen at codym@christhchapelbc.org or Ben Brummett at benb@christchapelbc.org.



3. READ ONE OF THE FOLLOWING ARTICLES

This week's articles are a little on the heavy side. One is by John Calvin. The other two are by a Puritan pastor named Thomas Watson. You might have to read them twice to begin to understand what they are saying, but it will be worth the time. Get your accountability partner to read them as well, then discuss them together.

The Mystery of Godliness by John Calvin

Expounding the Nature of Godliness by Thomas Watson

A Reproof to Such as are Only Pretenders to Godliness by Thomas Watson

The Great Cause – Part 5 by Matt Chandler

4. READ 2 TIMOTHY 3

Read over this chapter several times over the week. Take your time. Write down anything that jumps out at you as you read. Spend time thinking about verses that are particularly hard to understand. Take some extra time to meditate on verse 5. Consider any ways in which you may be "holding to a form of godliness," but denying its power. Ask God to show you a NEXT STEP.

The Mystery of Godliness

John Calvin

And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory. – 1 TIMOTHY 3:16.

ST. PAUL exhorted Timothy to behave himself in his office; showing him to what honor God had advanced him, in that he had placed him to govern his house. He showed him also that the office itself was honorable; because the church upholdeth the truth of God in this world, and that there is nothing more precious, or more to be sought after, than to know God, and to worship and serve Him, and be certain of His truth, that we might thereby obtain salvation. All this is kept safe for us: and thus, so great a treasure is committed to our care by means of the church; according to the words of St. Paul. This truth is well worthy to be more highly esteemed than it is.

What a hidden thing is this, and how wonderful a matter; that God was manifest in the flesh, and became man! Does it not so far surpass our understanding, that when we are told of it, we are astonished? Yet not withstanding, we have a full and sufficient proof, that Jesus Christ being made man, and subject to death, is likewise the true God, who made the world, and liveth forever. Of this, His heavenly power beareth us witness. Again, we have other proofs: to wit, He was preached unto the Gentiles; who before were banished from the kingdom of God: and that faith had had its course throughout the whole world, which at that time was shut up among the Jews; and likewise Christ Jesus was lifted up on high, and entered into glory, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father.

If men despise these things, their unthankfulness shall be condemned: for the very angels have hereby come to the knowledge of that which before they knew not of. For it pleased God to hide the means of our redemption from them, to the end that His goodness might be so much the more wonderful to all creatures: thus we see St. Paul's meaning. He calleth the church of God, the keeper of his truth: he likewise showeth that this truth is such a treasure, as ought to be highly esteemed by us. And why so? Let us mark the contents of the gospel; God abased Himself in such a manner, that He took upon Himself our flesh; so that we have become His brethren. Who is the Lord of glory, that He should so far humble Himself as to be joined to us, and take upon Him the form of a servant, even to suffer the curse that was due to us? St. Paul comprehendeth all things whatsoever that Jesus Christ received in His person; to wit, that He was subject to all our infirmities, *sin, only excepted.*

It is true that there is no blemish in Him, but all pureness and perfection. Yet so it is, that He became weak as we are, that He might have compassion and help our feebleness; as it is set forth in the epistle to the Hebrews (4:15). He that had no sin suffered the punishment due to us; and was, as it were, accursed of God the Father, when He offered Himself a sacrifice: that through His means we might be blessed; and that His grace

which was hidden from us, might be poured upon us. When we consider these things, have we not occasion to be astonished? Do we consider what a being God is? We can in no wise reach unto His majesty, which containeth all things in itself; which even the angels worship.

What is there in us? If we cast our eyes upon God, and then enter into a comparison, alas! shall we come near this highness which surmounteth the heavens? Nay, rather can we have any acquaintance with it? For there is nothing but rottenness in us; nothing but sin and death. Then let the living God, the well-spring of life, the everlasting glory, and the infinite power, come; and not only approach to us and our miseries, our wretchedness, our frailty, and to this bottomless pit of all iniquity that is in men; let not only the majesty of God come near this, but he joined to it, and made one with it, in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ! What is Jesus Christ? God and man! But how God and man? What difference is there between God and man?

We know that there is nothing at all in our nature but wretchedness and misery; nothing but a bottomless pit of stench and infection; and yet in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, we see the glory of God who is worshipped by angels, and likewise the weakness of man; and that He is God and man. Is not this a secret and hidden thing, worthy to be set out with words, and likewise enough to ravish our hearts! The very angels could never have thought upon it, as here observed by St. Paul. Seeing it pleased the Holy Ghost to set forth the goodness of God, and show us for how precious a jewel we ought to esteem it, let us beware on our part that we be not unthankful, and have our minds so shut up, that we will not taste of it, if we cannot thoroughly and perfectly understand it.

It is enough for us to have some little knowledge of this subject; each one ought to be content with what light is given him, considering the weakness of our judgment; and looking for the day wherein that which we now see in part, shall be wholly and perfectly revealed to us. Yet notwithstanding, we must employ our minds and studies this way. Why doth St. Paul call this a mystery of faith, that Jesus Christ, who is God everlasting, was manifest in the flesh? It is as much as if he should say, when we are gathered to God, and made one body with the Lord Jesus Christ, we shall behold the end for which we were made; to wit, that we might know that God is joined and made one with us in the person of His Son.

Thus, we must conclude that no man can be a Christian, unless he know this secret which is spoken of by St. Paul. Should we now examine, and ask both men and women whether they know what these words mean, that God was manifest in the flesh, scarcely one in ten could make so good an answer as would be looked for from a child. And yet we need not marvel at it; for we see what negligence and contempt there is in the greatest part of mankind. We show and teach daily in our sermons, that God took upon Him our nature; but how do men hear them? Who is there that troubleth himself much to read the Scripture? There are very few that attend to these things; every man is occupied with his own business.

If there be one day in the week reserved for religious instruction, when they have spent six days in their own business, they are apt to spend the day which is set apart for worship, in play and pastime; some rove about the fields, others go to the taverns to quaff: and there are undoubtedly at this time as many at the last mentioned place, as are here assembled in the name of God. Therefore, when we see so many shun and flee from this doctrine, can we marvel that there is such a brutishness, that we know not the rudiments of Christianity? We are apt to consider it as a strange language, when men tell us that God was manifest in the flesh.

But this sentence cannot be put out of God's register. We have no faith, if we know not that our Lord Jesus Christ is joined to us, that we may become His members. It seemeth that God would stir us up to think upon this mystery, seeing we are so sleepy and drowsy. We see how the devil stirreth up these old makebates to deny the humanity of Jesus Christ, and His Godhead: and sometimes to confound them both; that we may not perceive two distinct natures in Him: or else to cause us to believe that He is not the man who fulfilled the promises in the law; and consequently descended from the stock of Abraham and David.

Is it indeed the case, that such errors and heresies as were in the church of Christ at the beginning, are set forth in these days? Let us mark well the words that are here used by St. Paul: God was manifest in the flesh. When he calleth Jesus Christ God, he admits this nature which He had before the world was made. It is true, there is but one God, but in this one essence we must comprehend the Father, and a wisdom which cannot be severed from Him, and an everlasting virtue, which always was, and shall forever be in Him.

Thus, Jesus Christ was true God! as He was the wisdom of God before the world was made, and before everlastingness. It is said, He was made manifest in the flesh. By the word *flesh*, St. Paul gives us to understand that He was true man, and took upon Him our nature. By the word *manifest*, He showeth that in Him there were two natures. But we must not think that there is one Jesus Christ which is God, and another Jesus Christ which is man! but we must know Him only as God and man. Let us so distinguish the two natures which are in Him, that we may know that the Son of God is our brother. God suffereth the old heresies, which in times past troubled the church, to make a stir again in our days, to stir us up to diligence. The devil goeth about to destroy this article of our belief, knowing it to be the main prop and stay of our salvation.

If we have not this knowledge of which St. Paul speaketh, what will become of us? We are all in the bottomless pit of death. There is nothing but death and condemnation in us, until we know that God came down to seek and save us. Until we are thus learned, we are weak and miserable. Therefore, the devil went about doing all in his power to abolish this knowledge, to mar it, and mix it with lies, that he might utterly bring it to nought. When we see such a majesty in God, how dare we presume to come nigh Him, seeing we are full of misery! We must have recourse to this *link* of God's majesty, and the state of man's nature together.

Do what we can, we shall never have any hope, or be able to lay hold of the bounty and goodness of God, to return to Him, and call upon Him, until we know the majesty of God that is in Jesus Christ; and likewise the weakness of man's nature, which He hath received of us. We are utterly cast off from the kingdom of heaven, the gate is shut against us, so that we cannot enter therein. The devil hath bestowed all his art to pervert this doctrine; seeing that our salvation is grounded thereon. We should therefore be so much the more confirmed and strengthened in it; that we may never be shaken, but stand steadfast in the faith, which is contained in the gospel.

First of all we have this to note, that we shall never know Jesus Christ to be our Savior, until we know that He was God from everlasting. That which was written of Him by Jeremiah the prophet, must needs be fulfilled: "Let him that glorieth, glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord" (Jer. 9:24). St. Paul showeth that this must be applied to the person of our Lord Jesus Christ: and thereupon he protesteth that he made no account of any doctrine or knowledge, only to know Jesus Christ.

Again, how is it possible for us to have our life in Him, unless He be our God, and we be maintained and preserved by His virtue? How can we put our trust in Him? For it is written. "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm" (Jer. 17:5). Again, how can we be preserved from death except by God's infinite power? Even if Scripture bore no witness to the Deity of Jesus Christ, it is impossible for us to know Him as our Savior, unless we admit that He possesses the whole majesty of God; unless we acknowledge Him to be the true God; because He is the wisdom of the Father whereby the world was made, preserved, and kept in being. Therefore let us be thoroughly resolved in this point, whenever we speak of Jesus Christ, that we lift our thoughts on high, and worship this majesty which He had from everlasting, and this infinite essence which He enjoyed before He clothed himself in humanity.

Christ was made manifest in the flesh: that is to say, became man; like unto us in all things, sin only excepted (Heb. 4:15). Where he saith, sin only excepted, he meaneth that our Lord Jesus was without fault or blemish. Yet notwithstanding. He refused not to bear our sins: He took this burden upon Himself, that we through His grace might be disburdened. We cannot know Jesus Christ to be a mediator between God and man, unless we behold Him as man. When St. Paul would embolden us to call upon God in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, he expressly calleth Him man.

St. Paul saith, "There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (I Tim. 2:5). Under this consideration, we may in His name, and by His means come familiarly to God, knowing that we are His brethren, and He the Son of God. Seeing there is nothing but sin in mankind, we must also find righteousness and life in our flesh. Therefore if Christ has not truly become our brother, if He has not been made man like unto us, in what condition are we? Let us now consider His life and passion.

It is said (speaking of Christ), "But now once in the end of the world hath he appeared, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" (Heb. 9:26). And why so? St. Paul showeth us the reason in Romans 5:18. "As by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to

condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life." If we know not this, that the sin which was committed in our nature, was repaired in the self-same nature, in what situation are we? Upon what foundation can we stay ourselves? Therefore, the death of our Lord Jesus Christ could not profit us one whit, unless He had been made man, like unto us.

Again, if Jesus Christ were only God, could we have any certainty or pledge in His resurrection, that we should one day rise again? It is true that the Son of God rose again; when we hear it said, that the Son of God took upon Him a body like unto ours, came of the stock of David, that He is risen again (seeing our nature is of itself corruptible), and is lifted up on high unto glory, in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, "we are made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:6) Therefore, those that went about to bring to nought man's nature, in the person of the Son of God, are to be the more detested. For the devil raised up in old times some individuals who declared that Jesus Christ appeared in the shape of man, but had not man's true nature: thereby endeavoring to abolish God's mercy towards us, and utterly destroy our faith.

Others have imagined that He brought a body with Him from heaven; as though He partook not of our nature. It has been declared, that Jesus Christ had a body from everlasting; composed of four elements: that the Godhead was at that time in a visible shape, and that whenever the angels appeared, it was His body. What madness it is to make such an alchemy, to frame a body for the Son of God! What shall we do with that passage which saith, "He took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people" (Heb. 2:16,17).

It is said. He took upon Him our flesh, and became our brother. Yea, and that He was made like unto us, that He might have pity upon us, and help our infirmities. He was made the seed of David, that He might be known as the Redeemer that was promised, whom the fathers looked for from all ages. Let us remember that it is written, the Son of God appeared in the flesh; that is. He became very man, and made us one with Himself; so that we may now call God our Father. And why so? Because we are of the body of His only Son. But how are we of His body? Because He was pleased to join Himself to us, that we might be partakers of His substance.

Hereby we see that it is not a vain speculation, when men tell us that Jesus Christ put on our flesh: for hither we must come, if we will have a true knowledge of faith. It is impossible for us to trust in Him aright, unless we understand His manhood: we must also know His majesty, before we can trust in Him for salvation. We must know moreover that Jesus Christ is God and *man*, and likewise that He is but one person.

Here again the devil tries to stir up the coals of strife, by perverting or disguising the doctrine which St. Paul teaches us. For there have been heretics who have endeavored to maintain that the majesty and Godhead of Jesus Christ, His heavenly essence, was forthwith changed into flesh and manhood. Thus did some say, with many other cursed

blasphemies, that Jesus Christ was made man. What will follow hereupon? God must forego His nature, and His spiritual essence must be turned into flesh. They go on further and say Jesus Christ is no more man, but His flesh has become God.

These are marvelous alchemists, to make so many new natures of Jesus Christ. Thus the devil raised up such dreamers in old times to trouble the faith of the church; who are now renewed in our time. Therefore, let us mark well what St. Paul teaches us in this place; for he giveth us good armor, that we may defend ourselves against such errors. If we would behold Jesus Christ in His true character, let us view in Him this heavenly glory, which He had from everlasting; and then let us come to His manhood, which has been described heretofore; that we may distinguish His two natures. This is necessary to nourish our faith.

If we seek life in Jesus Christ, we must understand that He hath the whole Godhead in Him; for it is written, "For with thee is the foundation of life: in thy light shall we see light" (Psa. 36:9). If we would be maintained against the devil, and withstand the temptations of our enemies, we must know that Jesus Christ is God. To be short, if we would put our whole trust and confidence in Him, we must know that He possesses all power; which He could not have, unless He were God. Who is He that hath all power? It is He that became feeble and weak; the Son of the virgin Mary; He that was subject to death; He that bore our sins: He it is, that is the wellspring of life.

We have two eyes in our head, each performing its office: but when we look steadfastly upon a thing, our sight, which is separate of itself, is joined together, and becometh one; and is wholly occupied in beholding that which is set before us: even so are there two diverse natures in Jesus Christ. Is there anything in the world more different than the body and soul of man? His soul is an invisible spirit that cannot be seen or touched; which hath none of these fleshly passions. The body is a corruptible lump, subject to rottenness; a visible thing which can be touched: the body has its properties, which are entirely different from that of the soul. And thus we ask, what is man? A creature, formed of *body* and *soul*.

If God used such a workmanship in us, when He made us of two diverse natures, why should we think it strange, that He used a far greater miracle in Jesus Christ? St. Paul uses these words, *was manifest*, that we may distinguish His Godhead from His manhood; that we may receive Him, as God manifest in the flesh; that is to say. Him, who is truly God, and yet hath made Himself one with us: therefore we are the children of God; He being our justification, we are delivered from the burden of our sins. Seeing He hath cleansed us from all our misery, we have perfect riches in Him; in short, seeing He submitted Himself to death, we are now sure of life.

St. Paul addeth, "He was justified in the spirit." The word *justified* is oftentimes used in Scripture, for *approved*. When it is said. He was justified, it is not that He became just, it is not that He was acquitted by men, as though they were His judges, and He bound to give them an account: no, no; there is no such thing; but it is when the glory is given Him which He deserveth, and we confess Him to be what indeed He really is. It is said, the

gospel is justified when men receive it obediently, and through faith submit themselves to the doctrine that God teacheth: so in this place, it is said, Jesus Christ was justified in spirit.

We must not content ourselves by looking at the bodily presence of Jesus Christ, which was visible, but we must look higher. St. John says God was made flesh; or the Word of God, which is the same. The Word of God, which was God before the creation of the world, was made flesh; that is, was united to our nature; so that the Son of the virgin Mary, is God; yea, the everlasting God! His infinite power was there manifested; which is a sure witness that He is the true God! St. Paul saith, Jesus Christ our Lord was made of the seed of David; he likewise adds, He was declared to be the Son of God (Rom. 1).

It is not enough for us to behold Him with our natural eyes; for in this case, we should rise no higher than man: but when we see, that by miracles and mighty works, He showeth Himself to be the Son of God, it is a seal and proof, that in abasing Himself, He did not leave off His heavenly majesty! Therefore, we may come to Him as our brother: and at the same time worship Him as the everlasting God; by whom we were made, and by whom we are preserved.

Were it not for this, we could have no church; were it not for this, we could have no religion; were it not for this, we could have no salvation. It would be better for us to be brute beasts, without reason and understanding, than to be destitute of this knowledge: to wit, that Jesus came and joined His Godhead with our nature; which was so wretched and miserable. St. Paul declares this to be a mystery; that we may not come to it proudly and arrogantly, as many do who wish to be thought wise; this has caused many heresies to spring up. And indeed, pride hath always been the mother of heresies.

When we hear this word, *mystery*, let us remember two things; first, that we learn to keep under our senses, and flatter not ourselves that we have sufficient knowledge and ability to comprehend so vast a matter. In the second place, let us learn to climb up beyond ourselves, and reverence that majesty which passeth our understanding. We must not be sluggish nor drowsy; but think upon this doctrine, and endeavor to become instruction therein. When we have acquired some little knowledge thereof, we should strive to profit thereby, all the days of our life.

When we become possessed of this knowledge, that the Son of God is joined to us, we should cast our eyes upon that which is so highly set forth in Him; that is, the virtue and power of the Holy Ghost. So then, Jesus Christ did not only appear as man, but showed indeed that He was Almighty God as all the fulness of the Godhead dwelt in Him. If we once know this, we may well perceive that it is not without cause that St. Paul saith, all the treasures of wisdom are hidden in our Lord Jesus Christ.

When we have once laid hold on the promises of this Mediator, we shall know the height and depth, the length and breadth, yea, and whatsoever is necessary for our salvation: so that we may stay our faith upon Him, as upon the only true God; and likewise behold Him as our brother; who hath not only come near to us, but hath united and joined

Himself to us in such a manner, that He hath become the same substance. If we have come to this, let us know that we have arrived to the perfection of wisdom, which is spoken of by St. Paul in another place; that we may fully rejoice in the goodness of God; for it hath pleased Him to lighten us with the brightness of His gospel, and to draw us into His heavenly kingdom.

This sermon is from a Wm. B. Eerdmans' volume which was a reprint of the only sizable collection of John Calvin's sermons translated into the English language since the Sixteenth Century and the only volume ever published in America up to that time (1949). The collection was originally published in a limited edition in 1830 by John Forbes of New York.

Expounding the Nature of Godliness

By Thomas Watson

'EVERY ONE THAT IS GODLY'

It will first be enquired, 'What is godliness?' I answer in general, 'Godliness is the sacred impression and workmanship of God in a man, whereby from being carnal he is made spiritual.' When godliness is wrought in a person, he does not receive a new soul, but he has 'another spirit' (*Numb. 14:24*). The faculties are not new, but the qualities are; the strings are the same, but the tune is corrected. Concerning godliness, I shall lay down these seven maxims or propositions:

1. Godliness is a real thing

It is not a fantasy but a fact. Godliness is not the feverish conceit of a sick brain; a Christian is no enthusiast whose religion is all made up of fancy. Godliness has truth for its foundation; it is called 'the way of truth' (*Psa. 119:30*). Godliness is a ray and beam that shines from God. If God is true, then godliness is true.

2. Godliness is an intrinsic thing

It lies chiefly in the heart: 'circumcision is that of the heart' (*Rom. 2:29*). The dew lies on the leaf, the sap is the root. The moralist's religion is all in the leaf; it consists only in externals, but godliness is a holy sap which is rooted in the soul: 'in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom' (*Psa. 51:6*). The Chaldean expounds it, 'in the close place of the heart'.

3. Godliness is a supernatural thing

By nature we inherit nothing but evil. 'When we were in the flesh, the motions of sins did work in our members' (*Rom. 7:5*). We sucked in sin as naturally as our mother's milk, but godliness is the 'wisdom from above' (*Jas. 3:17*). It is breathed in from heaven. God must light up the lamp of grace in the heart. Weeds grow of themselves; flowers are planted. Godliness is a celestial plant that comes from the New Jerusalem. Therefore it is called a 'fruit of the Spirit' (*Gal. 5:22*). A man has no more power to change himself than to create himself.

4. Godliness is an extensive thing

It is a sacred leaven that spreads itself into the whole soul: 'the very God of peace sanctify you wholly' (*I Thess. 5:23*). There is light in the understanding, order in the affections, pliability in the will, exemplariness in the life. We do not call a black man white because he has white teeth. He who is good only in some part is not godly. Grace is called 'the new man' (*Col. 3:10*), not a new eye, or tongue, but a new man. He who is godly is good all over; though he is regenerate only in part, yet it is in every part.

5. Godliness is an intense thing

It does not lie in a dead formality and indifference, but is vigorous and flaming: 'fervent in spirit' (*Rom. 12:11*). We call water hot when it is so in the third or fourth degree. He whose devotion is inflamed is godly and his heart boils over in holy affections.

6. Godliness is a glorious thing

As the jewel to the ring, so is piety to the soul, bespangling it in God's eyes. Reason makes us men; godliness makes us earthly angels; by it we 'partake of the divine nature' (2 Pet. 1:4). Godliness is near akin to glory; 'glory and virtue' (2 Pet. 1:3). Godliness is glory in the seed, and glory is godliness in the flower.

7. Godliness is a permanent thing

Aristotle says, 'Names are given from the habit'. We do not call the one who blushes sanguine, but the one who is of a ruddy complexion (1 Sam. 17:42). A blush of godliness is not enough to distinguish a Christian, but godliness must be the temper and complexion of the soul. Godliness is a fixed thing. There is a great deal of difference between a stake in the hedge and a tree in the garden. A stake rots and moulders, but a tree, having life in it, abides and flourishes. When godliness has taken root in the soul, it abides to eternity: 'his seed remaineth in him' (1 John 3:9). Godliness being engraved in the heart by the Holy Ghost, as with the point of a diamond, can never be erased.

THE EXCELLENCE OF GODLINESS

'What is better than gold? Jasper. And what is better than jasper? Virtue.'

The excellence of godliness appears in several ways:

1. Godliness is our spiritual beauty

'The beauties of holiness' (Psa. 110:3). Godliness is to the soul what the light is to the world: to illustrate and adorn it. It is not greatness which sets us off in God's eye but goodness. What is the beauty of the angels but their sanctity? Godliness is the intricate embroidery and workmanship of the Holy Ghost. A soul furnished with godliness is damasked with beauty, it is enamelled with purity. This is the clothing of wrought gold which makes the King of heaven fall in love with us. Were there no excellence in holiness, the hypocrite would never try to paint it. Godliness sheds a glory and lustre on the saints. What are the graces but the golden feathers in which Christ's dove shines (Psa. 68:13)?

2. Godliness is our defence

Grace is called 'the armour of light' (Rom. 13:12). It is light for beauty and armour for defence. A Christian has armour of God's making which cannot be shot through. He has the shield of faith, the helmet of hope, the breastplate of righteousness. This is proof armour, which defends against the assaults of temptation and the terror of hell.

3. Godliness breeds solid peace

'Great peace have they which love thy law' (Psa. 119:165). Godliness composes the heart, making it quiet and calm like the upper region, where there are no winds and tempests. How can that heart be unquiet where the Prince of Peace dwells? 'Christ in you' (Col. 1:27). A holy heart may be compared to the doors of Solomon's temple, which were made of olive tree, carved with open flowers (1 Kings 6:32). The olive of peace and the open flowers of joy are in that heart. Godliness does not destroy a Christian's mirth, but refines it. His rose is without prickles, his wine without froth. He who is a favourite of heaven must of necessity be full of joy and peace. He may truly sing a requiem to his soul and say, 'Soul, take thine ease' (Luke 12:19). King Ptolemy asked someone how he might be at rest when he dreamed. He replied, 'Let piety be the scope of all your actions.' If anyone

should ask me how he should be at rest when he is awake, I would return a similar answer: 'Let his soul be inlaid with godliness.'

4. Godliness is the best trade we can engage in: it brings profit

Wicked men say, 'It is vain to serve God; and what profit is it?' (*Mal. 3:14*). To be sure, there is no profit in sin:

'Treasures of wickedness profit nothing' (*Prov. 10:2*). But godliness is profitable (*1 Tim. 4:8*). It is like digging in a gold mine, where there is gain as well as toil. Godliness makes God himself our portion: 'The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance' (*Psa. 16:5*). If God is our portion, all our estate lies in jewels. Where God gives himself, he gives everything else. Whoever has the manor has all the royalties belonging to it. God is a portion that can be neither spent nor lost (*Psa. 73:26*). Thus we see that godliness is a thriving trade. And as godliness brings profit with it, so it is profitable 'for all things' (*1 Tim. 4:8*). What else is, besides godliness? Food will not give a man wisdom; gold will not give him health; honour will not give him beauty. But godliness is useful for all things: it fences off all troubles; it supplies all wants; it makes soul and body completely happy.

5. Godliness is an enduring substance; it knows no fall of the leaf

All worldly delights have a death's-head set on them. They are only shadows and they are fleeting. Earthly comforts are like Paul's friends, who took him to the ship and left him there (*Acts 20:38*). So these will bring a man to his grave and then take their farewell. But godliness is a possession cannot be robbed of. It runs parallel with eternity. For cannot weaken it; age cannot wither it. It outbraves sufferings; it outlives death (*Prov. 10:2*). Death may pluck the stalk of the body but the flower of grace is not hurt.

6. Godliness is so excellent that the worst men would like have it when they are going hence

Though at present godliness is despised and under a cloud yet at death all would like to be godly. A philosopher asked a young man whether he would like to be rich Croesus virtuous Socrates. He answered that he would like to live with Croesus and die with Socrates. So men would like live with the wicked in pleasure but die with the godly: 'Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!' (*Numb. 23:10*). If, then, godliness is so at desirable death, why should we not pursue it now? Godliness is needful now and would be more feasible.

THERE ARE ONLY A FEW GODLY

They are like the gleanings after vintage. Most receive the mark of the beast (*Rev. 13:17*). The devil keeps open house for all comers, and he is never without guests. This may prevail with us to be godly. If the number of the saints is so small, how we should strive to be found among these pearls! 'But a remnant shall be saved' (*Rom. 9:27*). It is better to go to heaven with a few than to hell in the crowd.

CONSIDER HOW VAIN AND CONTEMPTIBLE OTHER THINGS ARE, ABOUT WHICH PERSONS VOID OF GODLINESS BUSY THEMSELVES

Men are taken up with the things of this life, and 'what profit hath he that hath laboured for the wind?' (*Eccles. 5:16*). Can the wind fill? What is gold but dust (*Amos 2:7*), which will sooner choke than satisfy? Pull off the mask of the most beautiful thing under the sun

and look what is inside. There is care and vexation. And the greatest care is still to come - and that is to give account to God. The things of the world are just like a bubble in the water or a meteor in the air.

But godliness has real worth in it. If you speak of true honour, it is to be born of God; if of true valour, it is to fight the good fight of faith; if of true delight, it is to have joy in the Holy Ghost. Oh, then, espouse godliness! Here reality is to be had. Of other things we may say, 'They comfort in vain' (*Zech. 10:2*).

Excerpted from The Godly Man's Picture, published by The Banner of Truth Trust.

A Reproof to Such as are Only Pretenders to Godliness

By Thomas Watson

Here is a sharp rebuke to such as are 'glittering dross' Christians, who only make a show of godliness, like Michal, who put 'an image in the bed', and so deceived Saul's messengers (*I Sam. 19:16*). These our Saviour calls 'whited sepulchres' (*Matt 23:27*) - their beauty is all paint! In ancient times a third part of the inhabitants of this island were called Picts, which signifies 'painted'. It is to be feared that they still retain their old name. How many are painted only with the vermilion of a profession, whose seeming lustre dazzles the eyes of beholders, but within there is nothing but putrefaction! Hypocrites are like the swan, which has white feathers, but a black skin; or like the lily, which has a fair colour, but a bad scent. 'Thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead' (*Rev. 3:1*). These the apostle Jude compares to 'clouds without water' (*Jude 12*). They claim to be full of the Spirit, but they are empty clouds; their goodness is but a religious cheat.

Question: But why do persons content themselves with a show of godliness?

Answer: This helps to keep up their fame: 'honour me now before the people' (*I Sam. 15:36*). Men are ambitious of credit, and wish to gain repute in the world, therefore they will dress themselves in the garb and mode of religion, so that others may write them down for saints. But alas, what is one the better for having others commend him, and his conscience condemn him? What good will it do a man when he is in hell that others think he has gone to heaven? Oh, beware of this! Counterfeit piety is double iniquity.

1. To have only a show of godliness is a God-enraging sin

The man who is a pretender to saintship, but whose heart tells him he has nothing but the name, carries Christ in his Bible but not in his heart. Some politic design spurs him on in the ways of God; he makes religion a lackey to his carnal interest. What is this but to abuse God to his face, and to serve the devil in Christ's livery? Hypocrisy makes the fury rise up in God's face; therefore he calls such persons 'the generation of his wrath' (*Isa. 10:6*). God will send them to hell to do penance for their hypocrisy.

2. To make only a show of godliness is self-delusion

Ajax in his frenzy took sheep for men, but it is a worse mistake to take a show of grace for grace. This is to cheat yourself: 'deceiving your own souls' (*Jas. 1:22*). He who has counterfeit gold instead of true, wrongs himself most. The hypocrite deceives others while he lives, but deceives himself when he dies.

3. To have only a name, and make a show of godliness, is odious to God and man

The hypocrite is born under a sad planet; he is abhorred by all. Wicked men hate him because he makes a show, and God hates him because he only makes a show. The wicked hate him because he has so much as a mask of godliness, and God hates him because he has no more. 'Thou hast almost persuaded me to be a Christian' (*Acts 26:28*). The wicked hate the hypocrite because he is almost a Christian, and God hates him because he is only almost one.

4. To be only comets and make a show of piety is a vain thing

Hypocrites lose all they have done. Their dissembling tears drop beside God's bottle; their prayers and fasts prove abortive. 'When ye fasted and mourned, did ye at all fast unto me, even to me?' (*Zech. 7:5*). As God will not recompense a slothful servant, neither will he recompense a treacherous one. All the hypocrites' reward is in this life: 'They have their reward' (*Matt. 6:5*). A poor reward, the empty breath of men. The hypocrite may make his receipt and write, 'Received in full payment'. Augustus Caesar had great triumphs granted him, but the senate would not allow him to be consul, or sit in the senate house. Hypocrites may have the praise of men, but though these triumphs are granted them, they shall never have the privilege of sitting in the senate house of heaven. What acceptance can he look for from God, whose heart tells him he is no better than a mountebank in divinity?

5. To have only a pretence of godliness will yield no comfort at death

Will painted gold enrich a man? Will painted wine refresh him who is thirsty? Will the paint of godliness stand you in any stead? How were the foolish virgins better for their 'blazing lamps', when they had no oil? What is the lamp of profession without the oil of grace? He who has only a painted holiness shall have a painted happiness.

6. You who have nothing but a specious pretext and mask of piety expose yourself to Satan's scorn

You shall be brought forth at the last day, as was Samson, to make the devil sport (*Judges 16:25*). He will say, 'What has become of your vows, tears, confessions? Has all your religion come to this? Did you so often defy the devil, and have you now come to dwell with me? Could you meet with no weapon to kill you, but what was made of gospel metal? Could you not suck poison anywhere but out of ordinances? Could you find no way to hell, but by seeming godly?' What a vexation this will be, to have the devil thus reproach a man! It is sad to be crowed over in this life. Cleopatra, Queen of Egypt, when she saw she was reserved by the enemy for a triumph, put asps to her breasts, and died, so that she might avoid the infamy. What, then, will it be to have the devil triumph over a man at the last day!

Let us therefore take heed of this kind of pageantry or devout stage play. That which may make us fear our hearts the more is when we see tall cedars in the church worm-eaten with hypocrisy. Balaam a prophet, Jehu a king, Judas an apostle - all of them stand to this day on record as hypocrites.

It is true that there are the seeds of this sin in the best; but as it was with leprosy under the law, all who had swellings or spots in the skin of the flesh were not reputed unclean and put out of the camp (*Lev. 13:6*); so all who have the swellings of hypocrisy in them are not to be judged hypocrites, for these may be the spots of God's children (*Deut. 32:5*).

But that which distinguishes a hypocrite is when hypocrisy is predominant and is like a spreading fluid in the body.

Question: When is a man under the dominion and power of hypocrisy?

Answer: There are two signs of its predominance: (i) A squint eye, when one serves God for sinister ends. (ii) A good eye, when there is some sin dear to a man, which he cannot part with. These two are as clear signs of a hypocrite as any I know.

Oh, let us take David's candle and lantern, and search for this leaven, and burn it before the Lord.

Christian, if you mourn for hypocrisy, yet find this sin so potent that you cannot get the mastery of it, go to Christ. Beg of him that he would exercise his kingly office in your soul, that he would subdue this sin, and put it under the yoke. Beg of Christ to exercise his spiritual surgery upon you. Desire him to lance your heart and cut out the rotten flesh, and that he would apply the medicine of his blood to heal you of your hypocrisy. Say that prayer of David often: 'Let my heart be sound in thy statutes' (*Psa.119:80*). 'Lord, let me be anything rather than a hypocrite.' Two hearts will exclude from one heaven.

From The Godly Man's Picture, published by The Banner of Truth Trust.



The Great Cause Pt. 5 – Application

Matt Chandler – May 10, 2009

In Genesis, God creates the Earth, creates the man, tells the man to subdue the earth, puts him in Eden, it's all really cultivated and uniform. And then He tells the man to cultivate the earth and make it look like Eden. Then it's very clear that a suitable helper wasn't found for the man. And so God puts the man out, pulls out a rib and forms Eve. She's not named Eve at first. In fact, when Adam wakes up and sees her, he names her "woman," the Hebrew for "mine." So he actually doesn't give her a name at first; he just says, "That's mine." And then in Genesis 3:20, after the fall has occurred, he does name her and gives her the name Eve, "*because she was the mother of all living.*" Now the interesting part about calling her a mother in Genesis 3:20 is it's not until Genesis 4:1 that she actually has children. So in Genesis 4:1, you'll read that Adam knew Eve and they conceived and bore a son. So Eve was considered by God a mother before she had children. So motherhood is more than just having children, bearing children and raising children. It's actually a feminine essence that God gives to the woman where she is a nurturer and a shaper of all things through that nurturing. So what we celebrate today is not just mothers, although there is a special place in all of our hearts for our mothers who took care of us, cleaned up after us, told our fathers to beat us when they got home, provided for us, loved us, counseled us and nurtured us. And we're celebrating the beauty of God found in the soul of woman today. So thank you, mothers, for loving, loving, caring and shaping. Thank you, sisters, for loving, caring and shaping. Thank you, daughters, for loving, caring and shaping. I mean not to take away from mothers at all, only to define it biblically and then celebrate God in it.

I want to finish "The Great Cause," which is this sermon series we've been doing for the last five weeks. We talked on Easter that the cross of Christ saved us from sin, but the resurrection of Christ saved us to what the Bible calls "the ministry of reconciliation." So we haven't just been saved from, we've been saved to. And then we talked about what the pinnacle problem in human beings is. It's sin. And we talked about how that's solved by God in the cross. Then we moved on and talked about what our corporate philosophy in regarding this mission that we've been put on by God. And today, I want to talk to you about is what this personally means for you. I love the gospel. I love it. It's what I want to talk about, it's what I want to preach about and it's what I always want to bring it back to. If all I give you is a list of moral things to do and not someone to see and put your trust in, I haven't done you a favor. So I love the gospel, and for me it makes sense of everything that is. Like you have to do something about beauty. This past week, it was terrible. I had to go out to La Jolla, which is in San Diego, and teach. What a dump. While I was out there, I had an opportunity to eat at a restaurant called *George's*, which sits right on the Pacific. So I sat up on *George's*, I had a great glass of _____ and a fish. And I sat there and watched the sun set on the Pacific. And I told you last week that we were designed to herald. So I heralded the best way I knew how. I

took a picture of the sun setting on the Pacific and sent it to my wife who couldn't go because she's too pregnant. With the picture I sent her a text, "Check this out. What are you doing?" She replied, "I'm raising your children." Sure, they're my children now. You have to do something with beauty, you have to do something with the fact that it exists. And I just refuse to believe that beauty, love and meaning are simply chemicals firing off in our brain. There's more going on in that. That takes me back to Genesis 1 and 2. God created things, and He created them good and beautiful and right and rhythmic and with purpose and without collateral damage. So I got to sit in that moment, and I got to see that beauty and that power. And although there are results of the fall all around me, there was in this moment just this picture of beauty that reminds me that there's something behind all of this.

And then at the same time, I can clearly see the results of the fall of man, that something happened in the middle of this rhythmic beauty to fracture this, to taint if not destroy all of it. And so, where the Bible tells us in Genesis 1 and 2 that He created everything rhythmically and beautifully, Genesis 3 tells us that the fall entered into that beauty and fractured it. And I know the narrative is that there was a piece of fruit that was eaten and then Adam's just standing there staring at the sky instead of helping his wife like he was supposed to, she gives it to him and he eats it. But pay attention to what the tree was called. The tree was called the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Which means God designed everything and said, "Listen to Me. If you'll follow in the way that I've created you to live, if you'll walk with Me intimately, if you'll trust Me, if you'll follow Me, then all the shalom, all the goodness, all the rhythm, all the beauty is yours." And then what did they do? They said, "No. My way." That was this cataclysmic event that fractured everything. It was mankind going, "Forget Your way, forget how You designed it to be, forget how You designed it to work, forget how You designed things to function. I'll do it my way, I'll handle it my way and I'll go my way." And it fractured it and ruined it all.

Even in that moment, you start getting pictures of God's grace. He goes to the man and says, "Because you did this you're going to work. You've always worked, but now it's going to be by the sweat of your brow. You know how men were called to cultivate? Now everything you try to cultivate will war against you. Business sometimes is not going to be a joyful experience. Being married sometimes is not going to be a joyful experience. Raising children sometimes is not going to be a joyful experience." He just goes, "Now what you were meant to cultivate is going to war against you." And then He turns to the woman and says, "Hey, your pain in childbirth...through the roof." But here you start to see His grace. He starts to explain what's going to happen between the serpent and mankind. He says to the woman, "The serpent is going to strike at the heel of your offspring and He'll crush his head." It's the first messianic prophecy we have in the Scriptures. And do you remember what happens next when they betrayed God? They immediately felt naked and ashamed and went and hid in a bush. And God, giving them what they want, went, "Okay, you don't want to live in Eden? You don't want to live in shalom?" And He sends them out, but before doing so He clothes them. He covers their shame.

And I say this all the time. There are two ways to view this book. Some people think that this book is really about us. So they'll say things like, "It's the road map to life." And I always say it's a really cruddy road map. Because it won't answer direct questions. Like, "Should I go to college here?...Should I marry Lauren?...Where should we go on vacation this year?..." Now I don't want to be too hard on them because I will point out that there are maps in the back. They're just not necessarily the road maps to life. In the end, the Bible is about the gospel of God. It's about God reconciling the world to Himself. It's about God reconciling all of creation back to Himself. And if you'll follow the story of the Bible, it's what that story is. Even after Adam and Eve are sent out of the garden, the world gets very, very dark, unbelievably dark. Eve gives birth to Cain and Abel, and it ends badly. And then from there it only gets worse. It gets so bad, so dark, so depraved that God laments the day He made human beings and He floods the earth killing all of them, except Noah and his family. So there's grace, mercy even in the middle of wickedness. You see this picture of God saving. And then if you watch *National Geographic*, Noah crashes his boat on a mountainside in Iraq (apparently we know where it is, we just can't get to it) After that, He forms this people and leads them out of slavery. And when they get out of slavery, they commit the same sin that Adam did when they said, "Okay, not Your Law; our way." And they make a golden calf. There's this constant cycle going on of man saying, "No, my way. I'm going to do it my way, I'm going to live my way. I don't care about Your way. We'll get to shalom our own way. We'll get to fulfillment our own way. We'll get to peace our own way. We don't need Your way. We don't want Your way." And in God judging that, coming in and saving in the middle of that, that's the story of the Bible. And it gets us to Jesus Christ who is God in the flesh who walks among men and shows you the kingdom that is to come. What you see in the life of Jesus is what God is going to do on earth. He's not burning this whole thing up. We're not going to get sucked out of here (sorry, LaHaye). God's going to restore all things to Himself, and Jesus is a model of what's to come. What do I mean by that? He flexes over all creation. He shows you His absolute authority over all creation. He calms the wind and the rain, He has dominion over every mental illness, every disease. And I don't know if you noticed this, but Jesus hates funerals. He doesn't go to them, not even His own. He shows up to Lazarus' funeral and does what? "Ah, this really isn't My scene. Lazarus, come out." He walks up to the centurion's daughter, "She's not dead; she's just sleeping." They laugh at Him. "Okay, why don't you guys get out, dummies. Get up, little girl." And she gets up. You see, Jesus wasn't a big fan of death; He was showing you how He designed it to be – there should be no disease, there should be no death, that those things are parts of the fall. He says in Revelation, "I make all things new." There is this day coming where there is no more death, there is no more disease. Everything will be put back into shalom. And really we've been saved from sin into God reconciling all things to Himself. I love this story. It is *the* story of history.

And it's what you find yourself caught up in. And here's what I pray for you. Here's how I think this needs to personally work itself out. The first way is I pray that you would cognitively understand the gospel, that you would understand it. Let me show you what I mean. Look in Romans 12:1, "*I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is*

your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind,...” Now this is not talking about information. I believe this is a common Evangelical mistake. This not just a reference to simple information. He says here that you are transformed, not conformed, by the renewal of your mind. So information is not our problem. What I mean by that is it’s everywhere. For goodness sake, you’re in the Bible Belt. Information is not the issue. How God works is not the issue. You could find that online in a second. What he says here is not just that we would have the right information and the right facts, because I have met some of the most narcissistic, pride-filled, arrogant pieces of chaff that I have ever met that know the Bible forwards and backwards. This is not about information; it’s about a renewed mind.

Here’s how I would put it. The mind wars against spiritual realities. It’s a part of the fall. Let me prove my point. Have you ever noticed that your mind can sharpen and you can pick up things until it comes to spiritual realities and then all of a sudden your mind starts to war against you? I know how it works better in men because I am one. Have you ever found it amazing that you can memorize the Mavericks’ lineup, know where everybody went to college, know where they came from before they got to the Mavs, know what they averaged in college, but the second you open up your Bible your brain shuts down on you? With business, have you ever noticed that you can see business, you can dissect it, you can lead companies? In certain arenas, have you ever noticed that your brain just works and works and works, but the second you try to meditate on, think on, dwell on, read on, focus on anything otherworldly, your brain wars against you? You will immediately think of something else to do. Have you ever noticed that it’s real easy to plan for most things, but the second you try to turn any piece of your mind onto spiritual realities, it wars against you, it betrays you? Am I talking to myself here? Am I right? Here’s why. The book of Ephesians says that the mind has a spirit, that it is depraved like the rest of us and the last thing it wants to do is exalt God and Christ as primary. And so it wars against us. So Paul here says, *“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind ...”* The mind needs to be renewed. It needs to be disciplined, it needs to be disciplined. In 2 Corinthians, Paul would say, “Let us take every thought captive.” “Let’s grab hold” is how it’s actually translated. Let’s put it in a head lock.

Okay, so how? You’ve got to know where I’m going here. I think you need to be in the Bible and not eat off of someone else’s plate all the time. You’ve got to be in the Bible, and not to just get information. We don’t go to the Bible just to get information. We do at times, but we go to the Bible to feast on and see. There’s a way to read the Bible to get information and regurgitate, and then there’s a way to read the Bible in the hope that you might experience and see God. You read it slowly. You meditate and think on the perfections of Christ, what the text reveals about Jesus. And my big prayer for you is, in having a renewed mind, you’ll start to see Him in everywhere. So back to La Jolla. I’m sitting at George’s, glass and food and setting, and there were two things racing through my mind. The first was that there’s something behind all of that. There’s just something raging behind all of that. And then I thought of a quote from Augustine, who was the bishop of Hippo in northern Africa. He said centuries ago as he watched the sunset, “If these are the pleasures afforded to sinful men, what does God have in store for those

whose hearts are His?" So that moment was just dinner at George's, but it was very holy and it stirred up in me gratitude. You see, when the mind is renewed you begin to see through different lenses. Last night I get into bed and my wife who is very great with child gets into bed and she just leans over and kisses me on my neck. For some crazy reason she loves me. And here's what I know. The Bible says "*He who finds a wife finds a good thing.*" You've probably picked this up, but I'm a little bit gangly, a little bit of an ADD spaz. Most women don't find that attractive. But for some reason, this very beautiful, godly, talented, smart woman loves me. That's a gift. God gave me that to me despite who I am. And this morning, we got up to make mama breakfast, and we made more of a mess than we made breakfast. In that moment there's this reminder that in the Bible it says that children are a blessing from the Lord, that God loved me enough to give them to me to really reveal my own selfishness and to push me to Him. It's the same reason He gave me a wife. And there's this really beautiful meaning there at breakfast this morning. You see, with a renewed mind, you start to see Him everywhere.

And that leads to my second hope for you. Not only do I hope that you would be able to understand what the gospel is and see everything through gospel lenses, but that you would also feel it in your heart. Now I'm not talking about youth camp. Do you remember Thursday night at youth camp? It was like everyone was going to get saved as if it weren't an option. The worship leader was like, "Look, we're going to keep singing 'Banqueting Table' until everyone gets saved in here. There's four of you who haven't moved. We're not shutting it down. I don't care if you've already been saved. You can do it again, we're Baptist." I'm not talking about everybody at the altar weeping. That's not what I'm talking about. I'm talking about gospel lenses, that you see the world in such a way that you are constantly aware of your own depravity, the goodness of God despite your depravity in the cross and the grace afforded to you in a thousand different arenas and that that might stir up in your heart biblical things like gratitude, thankfulness, worship. I pray that we might have a heart that's stirred up for Him, that this wouldn't merely be an intellectual exercise.

Which leads me to my third hope for you. My hope is that you would understand it in your mind, that you would feel it in your heart and that you would work it out with your hands. If we're honest, the bulk of us in this room are functional atheists. Here's what I mean. With your mouth you will ascribe, "Oh yeah, I'm a Christian. Yeah, I believe the Bible. Yeah, I believe in God." But when it comes to every arena of your life outside of church attendance, nothing is governed by or influenced by the God that you say you love and serve or His revealed will in the Bible. So it's, "Yes I'm a Christian, yes I believe the Bible, yes I believe in God, but I'll do marriage like I want to do marriage, I'll raise my kids like I want to raise my kids, I'll handle my money like I want to handle my money and I'll live my life like I want to live my life. You give me salvation, and then shut up and leave me alone. The rest of the life is mine." And if we're honest, that's the bulk of us in here that have no intention at any level of submitting to God or His commands. We simply want to be good Bible Belt Evangelicals, which means we know the right answers to the big questions, "Yes there's a God, yes I believe in Jesus, yes I like the Bible, but I have no intention of any application of any of it." You're functionally an atheist. And that gets us right back to Genesis 3, doesn't it? What

wrecked shalom was man going, "Forget Your way. I'll do it my way." And that's why you've got such a thin, impotent version of Christianity. Because everybody's a spiritual bulimic.

As I was growing up, my parent's listened to the Carpenters all the time. It's probably why I hate country music now. So even to this day, I would get some horrible Carpenters song stuck in my head. It wasn't until years later that I heard the story of Karen Carpenter and how she died. She had anorexia nervosa, where she just starved herself to death. I don't think that's the bulk of us in the Bible Belt spiritually. I think we're the opposite of that. I think we're bulimics, which means we constantly hear truth and then on the way out to the car vomit it up all over the sidewalk before any of it can take root and influence us. And I don't understand it. Do you think you're tricking God? I'm just confused. Do you think you've disoriented Him? "Well, no part of his life is Mine, but there he is at the 9:00AM. I don't know what to do. Jesus, help Me with that. Holy Spirit, group think. What's up with this guy?" Do you really think you've dumbfounded the triune God of the universe? You don't think He knows? Do you think that that's Christianity? Weird times in a weird place and a dumb hobby. So what you get is a lot of people who say the right things but are just as narcissistic and filled with pride as anyone else is out there.

Men, do you love your wife like Christ has commanded you to love your wife? "Whoa, let's that's a low blow. Here's the reason why. You don't even know my wife..." I don't care if your wife is bat crazy. That doesn't change anything. "Well you don't know mine. I sleep with an eye open. She's going to kill me." Well I say put a metal plate on and pray. You'll go to heaven, and that will be on her. Do you love her like Christ loved the church? "Well, blah blah blah..." Shut up with that. Everyone can think of reasons to not be obedient. All you're doing is going, "My way." Do you raise your kids like the Bible has asked you to raise your kids? The Scriptures command me to train them up in the way of the Lord and to impart to them the glories of God. Are you doing that? Do you see your life, your children through the lenses of what God has commanded you to do? And listen, I'm not against sports and against letting your kid be the cool kid. I mean, some of that's really silly to me, but maybe it's because my kids are going to be really uncoordinated and not able to play sports. There's probably not going to be a lot of "select opportunities" for the Chandler babies. We seem to be uncoordinated and gangly. But at the end of the day are you raising your kids like the Bible commands? Like at our house, twice a week at least, we have a little family devotional. Why? Because I want my kids to understand the gospel in their minds, to feel it in their hearts and I want them to work it out with their hands. Do you? What about your money? Do you see your money as yours and this life as all there is? Do you spend and spend and spend, maybe beyond what you even make because this is all that is? Or do you understand that all you've been given has been given to you by God, for God and for the great mission of reconciliation that we've been called to? And on and on I could go here. You see, these are weird times, where it's a very easy thing to say, "Yeah I believe in God...yeah I read the Bible...yeah I'm a Christian" and then have no objective evidence of that. Or sometimes you can point to objective evidence. Most of the time it's church attendance. So my prayer is not that you would just understand it in your mind and not just that you

would feel it in your heart, but that that might move you to a life lived for the glory of God. So this takes us back to “do not be conformed to the pattern of this world.”

I’ve made it no secret that I think most of church is pretty silly. And I’ll tell you why. I think there is this really base idea that we can be cool enough for the world and we can compete with Hollywood or something. Like we can put on a show that’s cool enough for people to go, “That’s what I want right there.” The truth is you don’t show the world who Jesus is by trying to be as much like them as possible. It’s our otherworldliness that serves as the catalyst to draw people to Himself. It’s the fact that the first three years of my marriage were just an absolute nightmare and I used to lay there and think to myself, “Is this the rest of my life?” I don’t even know what she was thinking; I’ve never even asked. I don’t want to know. But what did we do? We pressed through biblically, we pressed into one another, we got help outside of ourselves, we let someone speak into our lives, we submitted to what the Scriptures said. And then the last seven years has been this really beautiful thing. Loving my wife even when there wasn’t a lot of love back, budgeting our money so that we have money to give away every month, living open-handed with our finances, choosing to drive lesser cars than we could so that we can give to church plants in Philadelphia and Manhattan, this is a life lived for the gospel, this is what I’m asking you.

I really am trying to understand what this is down here. My hope is for us. That’s what I’ve been given charge with, us. So if you’re a guest with us and you’re going, “Man, is he always angry like this?” No, but I’ll try to explain what I’m doing here. I understand from Scripture that when I die I have to give an account for the Village, not just for my own life but for the Village as well. I’m accountable not for your response but whether or not I led in what Paul called “the full counsel of God.” So if I see in us a trait that’s unbiblical and is going to lead to our own destruction, how foolish would I be to not address it? So what I’m doing here is pleading, for the glory of Christ and for your joy, knowing biblically and historically that most of you will throw this up in the parking lot.

Can you just for a second here take some stock of your own life? Is there an understanding of the gospel? Is it the lens through which you see everything else? Can you feel the weight and the joy of salvation, of grace and mercy of God? And then are you working this thing out with your hands at all? Is there in you a submission to the God of the Bible, God as He’s revealed Himself to us? Every command of God is not about God flexing His power, it’s about lining you back up with how He created things to be. So are we in Genesis 2 or are we in Genesis 3? Are we once again going, “No, my way is better. My way of getting there is better.” We’ve got nothing but a few thousand years of history that reveals how that ends. So would you take stock of your faith? Would you take stock of what you really believe? Would you maybe, by the grace of God, not lie to yourself anymore? The real tragedy is not that you can fool others; the real tragedy is that some of you have actually fooled yourself.

Let’s pray, “Father, I thank You for these men and women and for the opportunity to come together and just enjoy You and worship You and be challenged by You. We want our lives to be more and more and more Yours. And so will You teach us that, because I

think the bulk of us haven't been disciplined or trained into that? I pray that You would speak to the deep places where there's idolatry and pride. I pray that You would reveal it and destroy it. Help us. We need You. It's for Your beautiful name. Amen."