

Feel

by John Piper

John Piper emphasizes the importance of corporate worship and the need to spread a passion for God's supremacy for the joy of all peoples through Jesus Christ.

Duration: 1:04:51

Scripture: Deuteronomy 28:47, Psalm 37:4, Psalm 100:2, 2 Corinthians 1:24, Philippians 1:20, Philippians 4:4, 1 Thessalonians 5:16

Topics: "Christian Life"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of prioritizing emotions and affections in the pursuit of maximum joy in God. He acknowledges that he may not have suffered as much as others, but believes his message is biblical. The implications for pastors are to encourage their congregations to pursue joy in God as a lifelong vocation. The speaker also highlights the importance of not lording over the congregation, but working with them for their joy.

Transcript

Thank you Martin and the team that put this together and honored me with the privilege of speaking to the most important people in the universe under God. I think more important than angels are the shepherds of God's flock. So to speak to you, and I know not all of you are pastors, but that's who I have mainly in mind, so it's an awesome thing for me to to address you.

Thank you Stuart, good to follow you around a little bit, and I cannot overstate both in settings like this and week by week in my local church the enormity of the importance of corporate worship for my soul. I think that when I lay my head down to die it will be true still that the moments of my sweetest communion with God will have been standing with my people in song to the living God. I am sanctified more in worship than any other time.

I am brought low from my sin in corporate worship more than any other time. I am given hope from my marriage and my children and my church when I'm feeling despondent in corporate worship more than any other time. I don't know how it is with you, but the gift that God has given to the church in the last 30 years or so in a kind of awakening of corporate God-centered worship in song that's very earnest, very joyful, is a gift to me personally and so those whom he has raised up to lead local churches and then to share in events like this are hugely important to me because God has ordained, in my case anyway, that those moments be sanctified and I generally feel grieved about myself because as I stand sometimes with my

hands lifted and sometimes with my eyes closed articulating God's majesty in song, I feel so foolish about the way I treat people 12 hours earlier.

I just feel so foolish. I feel, why did that become such a big deal? Why did I get so angry? Why did I get so discouraged over such a little thing and my world comes into focus in worship and I just wish, pray for me in this regard, that I could just stay like that. I think when you were introduced, your hope is that you help people begin it and then it just continues.

It just continues. We just worship all day and so when we're upset that somebody said something, we just say, this is not big enough to be mean about. This is just small.

We're a little vapor. We're going to get blown away. Why am I so? So all of that to say we do have a great God.

He is worthy of song. He's worthy of everything. In 1993, I am leading into a message.

In 1993, we went through the biggest crisis in our church. I've been at our church now for about 30 years and we went through the biggest crisis we've ever had. Huge, huge moral crisis in some lives and then a big split in an attitude towards certain things and 230 people left the church and we were brought to our faces and we called the next year the year of tears and the next year, the year of self-searching and identity.

We didn't grow at all for four years flat. Nobody wanted to be a part of this mess and in that second year called the year of searching of our own souls and who we were. God gave us, I believe, a mission statement.

I don't think every church has to have a mission statement and all mission statements are inadequate and imperfect because they always leave important things out. But we have one and now what is that 17 years ago? It still burns inside of me. I had been there at the time 13 years and so the church and I had grown together.

So the church's mission statement and my mission statement for my life are virtually identical. And I want to say it to you, unpack it for maybe three or four minutes and make it the background of why I'm going to say what I'm going to say in this message. The mission statement that what the church did, what we did was we formed a group of, you might want to try this, some crisis moment in your ministry.

The church was probably a thousand folks at that time, I don't know, and we took 23 people, four staff and the rest lay folks and we met together every two weeks maybe for a year or so, just talking and praying about who we were. Everything under the sun, music identity, ministry identity, style identity, theological identity, outreach identity, all kinds of what do we want to do? What does God want to make us? And they sent me away after months of that and said, go draft a document, a statement and then some fleshing out, then bring it back and we'll pick it apart and refine it. And because that's why I think things happen.

Committees don't write documents and they just refine things that others do. So I went away and I brought this back and we tweaked it. And then a few years later we added another phrase, but here's what it is.

We exist and I could say I exist to spread a passion for the supremacy of God in all things for the joy of all peoples, with an S on the end, all peoples through Jesus Christ. That's our mission statement. So right up there at the top is we exist to spread.

And that gives some people the willies like, whoa, what about inside? What about us? And of course, you can't spread anything you don't have. And so children's ministries really matter to raise them up, to have this passion so they can spread it. But the point of that is to say, if everything we do terminates on me or on us, not only is the world told to go to hell, but I lose my biggest joy because a shared joy is a doubled joy.

You don't find your highest pleasures by isolating yourself in a room with God. You go from that room and speak his name. And when another person is drawn into your joy in him, it gets bigger.

I'm a Christian hedonist. I want maximum joy, and I know it doesn't come to me by myself. It comes when I am granted the privilege to talk to somebody about him, to sing with somebody about him.

That's when this joy that's in there gets bigger. And I want it to be bigger. So we exist to spread a passion.

We don't just exist to spread a doctrine. I am reformed. I am Calvinistic.

I like to be biblical, through and through, more important than any other way of describing me. And I regard that as absolutely important, but it's not the end point, which is one of the points of the two messages I have. I'm going to talk more about doctrine and thinking this evening, and I'm going to talk about passion, mainly this morning.

So I believe thinking rightly about God is not an end in itself, but serves the heart's passion for God. So we exist to spread, yes, by means of right thinking, right teaching, right doctrine. But we are after passionate hearts for Jesus.

And of course, you can hear how impossible this mission is. You can't make any of that happen in anybody. That's the Holy Spirit's work, but he calls us to be involved.

So this is our goal. We exist to spread a passion for the supremacy of God. Matt, who's traveling with me, we were sitting over there a few minutes ago, waiting and praying.

And I looked at him and I said, Matt, the most overwhelming thing in the world is that God exists. And we just sat and just tried to let it sink in. God exists.

This stuff we think is so real, you know, all this, this has nothing. God is everything. God is absolute reality.

He was there before any of this. In him we live and move and have our being. He sustains it by the word of his power.

One change in his mind, we go poof out of existence. God is reality. God is 10 million times more important than you are, more important than your church, more important than South Africa, or the United States of America, or all the galaxies.

They are as nothing. They are dust in the scales. You put God in the universe in the scale, it goes like that.

God over here, just the sheer being of God is breathtaking, humbling. So we exist to spread a passion for his supremacy. We want people to be stunned by the sheer existence of Almighty God as he is revealed in this book, not the God they make up, this God.

We exist to spread a passion for the supremacy of God in all things. I don't want everybody to become a pastor. I want there to be homemakers and nurses and teachers and street sweepers and garbage collectors and carpenters and brick masons and computer programmers who do everything they do for the glory of God.

They regard him as supreme in everything they do with their hands so that everything becomes an act of worship. We just want to permeate life with God, supreme in all things, in all the subjects of school, absolutely supreme. So we exist to spread a passion for the supremacy of God in all things for the joy of all peoples.

So we want joy to spread and we'll just enjoy the rain. You hear it, I hear it, you need it, but I think I can make myself heard if they help me. For the joy of all peoples with an S on the end because I wanted so much in the crafting of this mission statement to have missions, not just a vague sense of being missional or a vague sense of having some kind of impact, but rather there are thousands of peoples, ethnic groups that are on the planet that God means to reach.

The church is to be planted in every ethnic group on the planet and we exist to that end. So missions in the historic sense of sending people across a culture, learning another language, going where there are no evangelists ethnically and indigenously to do the work. You've got to have missionaries, whatever you call them, and they go there at the cost of their lives often and they plant God's church who says, I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it.

And then we add it at the end through Jesus Christ because we know that without the gospel and without his work we can't do this. Nobody has a passion for God that honors God who doesn't come to God through Christ crucified and risen. So Muslims and Hindus and Buddhists and non-Christian Jewish people do not honor God.

We exist to spread a passion for the supremacy of God in all things for the joy of all peoples through Jesus Christ. Let me just say a word for my devotions this morning and then tackle my topic for the remainder of the time. Through Jesus Christ, what Christ did, as you know, was come from the Father as God live a perfect life which we couldn't die in our place in order to demonstrate Romans 5, 8, the love of God for us while we were yet sinners rise from the dead for our justification, ascend and intercede forever before the Father for us when we were absolutely and totally undeserving of this love.

Nobody comes to the Father except through him and nobody can honor the Father if they dishonor the Son which all non-Christians do by rejecting Jesus. So Christ is absolutely essential. This morning I was reading in Jeremiah and I read these words which spoke very very powerfully to me personally and I felt like perhaps I should put them up here at this point.

God says concerning the exiles in Babylon, thus says the Lord God of Israel, like these good figs, he had just used an analogy of good and bad figs, like these good figs I will regard as good the exiles from Judah. They weren't good. They hadn't become good.

And he says now after 70 years of punishment and they're still not good. They rejected the Lord when he came. I will regard them as good.

And then verse 7, that's Jeremiah 24, 5. Then verse 7, I will give them a heart to know that I am the Lord. And what is so precious about that is the order of those two statements. I will regard them as good.

Then I will give them a heart to know me. This is our only hope that God in election chooses to regard us in Christ as good and then he pursues us and makes us good. If that order were not true, I would be undone.

If I felt that I had to preach, I had to be a perfect husband, I had to do fathering right in order to get God to regard me as good. So when I say through Jesus Christ, whose righteousness is counted as mine so that the father rightly can regard me as good, because by faith I'm united to Jesus and in him I am righteous, good in God's sight so that now he can begin to make me good. And he's working really slow on me, like maybe I mean, I really felt this morning, maybe it will be 70 years.

Maybe I'll become good at 70 like the exile and I'll come home and I'll be a good husband and a good father to my 45 year old children. You laugh. OK, all that's introduction.

What I want to talk about in the two sessions is why I prioritize and I believe you should prioritize biblically its right to prioritize. Emotions, affections, passions. As highly as I've just spoken about.

And I'll show you how high that is. Why? What what will it do for us? What will it do for your church? What will it protect you from and what will it win? What biblically show? I want to show you from the Bible why this is so important that that the affections or the emotions are more ultimate than thinking. And then we'll talk about thinking and how important it is this evening.

So that's where I'm going and I want you to just go away feeling OK. In my own soul and in my church. My goal must be a passion for God and joy in God and zeal for God, delight in God, satisfaction in God, all these feeling like words.

Now, give me give you four qualifying observations before I move into scripture proper on that. Number one, a definition. When I talk about emotions or affections.

I am not thinking primarily of physical phenomena. Trembling hands, fluttering eyelashes, wobbling knees, butterflies in the stomach, tingling in the spine, you name it. I'm not talking about that.

Those are great. I like them. They come, they go.

They're not of the essence. When I think emotion or affection, I am talking about a spiritual reality that is not identical with its sometime evidences in the body. I have in mind things like joy, fear, gratitude, desire, hate, anger, tenderheartedness, peace, loneliness, sorrow, regret, shame, hope.

And all those are from the Bible. The list goes on and on. The Bible is just rich with emotional language.

And I don't mean that those emotions are bodily. Now, how do we know that they're more than bodily? Because we we're in bodies. We can't we can't deny that we're in bodies.

And these things are so interwoven with our bodies that here and now in this body, they feel often like bodily sensations. How do I know that they are more than that, deeper than that? And there are two reasons why we know this. One, God has them.

And don't get bent out of shape here about the impassibility of God. I don't think God is a victim of any of his emotions the way we are. There is a mystery in this, but I'm a Bible guy, not mainly a systematics guy, and the Bible talks endlessly about God's emotions.

And he has them, and he gets really happy and really angry. Hosea 11.8, my compassion grows warm and tender. That's God talking.

Or Jeremiah 4.8, fierce anger of the Lord is coming. God has no body. Therefore, fierce anger and warm, tender compassion cannot be bodily at its ultimate root.

That's first argument. Second argument, we know it's not bodily, is because you're going to have them after you die and go to heaven. Otherwise, I can't make any sense out of Paul's words in Philippians that to die is gain.

It is far better to go and be with Christ, better with zero affections for him. No way. My love for him, my joy in him, my satisfaction in him, my longings for him are going to be thousandfold intensified when I meet him face to face and my body is lying in the grave.

So for those two reasons, please, when I talk about affections or emotions, don't hear me talking about physical sensations. That is the way we experience them largely here. But that's not what they are in their essence.

That's qualification or clarification. Number one, here's number two. Why do I rank these affections above thinking, and I just want to say briefly here why, and then we'll talk about it more this evening.

John 8:32, you will know the truth, know the truth, know the truth, and the truth will set you free from what? Well, in the context, sin. And what is sin? It's not just bad action. It's bad attitudes.

It's bad feelings. It's bad motives. And therefore, to know rightly is to be set free from the bondage on our spiritual affections that cause them to go after illicit sex or money or notoriety.

These horrible bondages our affections live in while we don't know the truth. And so Jesus is saying, if you know rightly, you will then as a consequence, which means this is more ultimate. This is the goal is to have all those things set free for God.

That's why I think they are more ultimate than right thinking. Right thinking is a means to right feeling. More on that later.

Here's a third qualifying or clarifying observation at the beginning. Why do I rank right feeling over right doing? It's a little more controversial, maybe. You sure you want to rank right feeling over right doing? Yes, I do.

Matthew 15, 8. This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. In vain do they worship me. So he's looking at a group of people singing or reciting a liturgy or lifting their hands or hugging each other.

All physical manifestations. And he's looking at their heart and he's saying, I don't like this. I don't like what's going on here.

I don't like these lifted hands. I don't like these hugs. I don't like these songs.

I don't like this bodily action because their hearts are not with me, which means bodily action minus heart affections is worthless. It's worse than worthless. It stinks to God.

So, yes, I'm going to rank this heart of mine over this body of mine in all of its doing, doing, doing, doing good deeds without a heart for God is blasphemy. It's called it's got a name in the Bible. If they're religious, it's called hypocrisy.

There is such a thing as hypocrisy. I wonder if we have a vote here about what Jesus hated most as revealed in the Gospels, what our vote would be. My vote would be hypocrisy.

He gets more bent out of shape about hypocrites. I mean, the language Jesus uses in Matthew 23 is just over the top towards hypocrites, whitewashed tombs, vile inside like graves that people walk over. They stink.

And he's talking about religious people and they just stink to him. So I tremble at the thought of my body, my voice, my hands and my feet doing right stuff with my heart a mile away from God Almighty. So, yes, I'm ranking my heart and its affections for God as more essential than doing more ultimate than doing.

Imagine yourself in heaven. What will be or on the new heavens and the new earth? What will be the ultimate, the ultimate? And the ultimate will be. That are.

Thinking and are doing rightly expresses massive and unsullied. Joy in God and the joy in God will be what makes the thinking and makes the doing as beautiful as it will be. That's clarification number three and number four.

How does this prioritizing of affections and feelings so high relate to the glory of God, which in the Bible is manifestly the most important reality in the universe? So I'm totally with Jonathan Edwards in his book, *The End for Which God Created the World*, as the display of his glory, that it might be reverberating back to him in all appropriate ways so that all things are from him and through him and to him, to him be glory forever. There is no doubt that I am subordinate. I am dependent.

And God is majestically, absolutely important. And I'm not. So how does my prioritizing of the heart so high relate to that? And my life sentence to try to capture this is God is most glorified in me when I am most satisfied in him.

And therefore, I think prioritizing satisfaction in God as the ultimate goal of my life is the indispensable way of making much of him as much as I should. Now, we need Bible under this. And so I think the outline that I have left is this.

I want to give you some biblical evidence for that last sentence. God is most glorified in me when I'm most satisfied in him. So all you lovers, I hope you are of the glory of God, will feel a sense not of some tension or competition between the elevation of affections, but rather that that elevation is an essential, essential, necessary means of glorifying God.

So that's the first thing we're going to do next is give biblical evidence of that and then four implications for our people, for our pastoral work, for our preaching and for the wider challenges of evangelicalism. If we can do that in the next little while. Let's go to Philippians chapter one.

Philippians chapter one. This was the text in chapter one that I preached on when I. Candidated at my church in February of 1980. And it has not ceased to be for me pivotal.

For all of ministry and theology. Everything I do more or less flows from this and I'm starting at verse 19. No, verse 20.

It is my eager expectation and hope that I will not at all be ashamed. How many times I fail, but that is my eager expectation and hope that I would not at all be ashamed, but positively now that with full courage now, as always, Christ. Would be honored.

The Greek Megaluno. Megaluno face a tie here. Magnified, you could hear it mega mega made much of magnified that that Christ would be magnified made much of in my body.

Whether by life or by death. For in that little word for there has become all important. For to me to live is Christ.

And to die is gain and the logic. So here's you can see how thinking is functioning for me here in relation to affections, because I'm going after affections in this verse because they're here massively. But I got to think to make this happen.

And the word for their forces me to think about why it's there, because Paul didn't throw his words around under inspiration carelessly. So why is that little word for at the beginning of verse 21? How does it support or clarify what went before? So let's read and try to get that. So he says his passion, his aim, his longing, his eager expectation is that Christ would be magnified or honored in his body.

And then he he says either way, whether I live, I want my life to be a magnifying of Christ or if I'm called to die in Rome, I want my dying to be a magnifying of Christ. I want I want when I die, I want Christ to look really good. And when I live, I want Christ to look really good.

That's why I'm on the planet. That's why you're on the planet. You exist to make Christ look good.

That's why you're here. That's why you exist. That's why the universe exists.

That's why you write that creation song we just sang you taught us. OK, that's why he wrote that song, because the creation exists to make Christ look good and the linking of the old and the new creation is a great thing. Now, the question is how? Let's just take the death pair.

OK, you get two pairs, right? Life and death. And then verse twenty one to live is Christ and to die is gain. So life corresponds in verse twenty with live in verse twenty one and death in verse twenty corresponds with die in verse twenty one.

You see that it's not an accident, those pairs. And so we're supposed to learn from the word for that what he says about living sheds light back on how you magnify Christ in your life in verse twenty. And what he says about dying sheds light back on how you magnify Christ in your death.

And the death pair is the most illuminating. We could unpack the life pair by going over to chapter three, verse eight, where he talks about life and treasuring and valuing Christ above all things now. But let's talk about the death pair.

So let's just leave out the life pair and read it like this. My eager expectation and hope is that now is always Christ would be honored in my body when I die for to me to die is gain. Does that make sense? My passion is to magnify Christ in my dying.

Paul knew he was going to die. He could smell it. I want to make him look good in my dying.

For the support for that, the explanation of that, the ground for that is to me to die is gain. That's how Christ is made to look good in your dying. That is in the moment of your dying or the process, the last hours, the last days, the last year as life drains out of your body with some horrid disease or some persecution or some imprisonment as the as the life is draining out of your body.

Christ looks good if you are communicating gain, gain, gain and people around you say, how can this be gain? You're losing your wife. You're losing your children. You're losing your job.

You're losing your retirement. You're losing your plans. You're losing comfort.

What do you mean gain? And then to get answers like that, you keep reading. So let's keep reading. If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me, which I shall choose.

I cannot tell. I'm hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ.

Here it is. For this is far better. With Christ is better than wife.

With Christ is better than grandchildren. With Christ is better than comfort. With Christ is better than retirement.

With Christ is better than all my plans. Bring it on, death. Bring it on, loss.

Because I say gain now all my theology is there. When I say God is most glorified in me, when I am most satisfied in him, I'm getting that right there. That's there in my moment of dying.

God will be most magnified when I am so satisfied in being with Jesus that I can let goods and kindred go this mortal life also. Right. The body they may kill.

God's truth abided still. His kingdom is forever. Make my day death and would would that God would work in me and in you that that's just not words right now.

It could just be words, right? I could be a fake. I could come to my dying day and and under the demonic power of the devil and the horrible suffering of physical evil and mess it up big time, which is why Duma Duma Duma is not a good idea. God, God, God is the right thing to do because Piper, big talk, Piper.

We'll see. We'll check you out when that day comes. So don't assume, just pray.

OK, so there it is. That's my biblical foundation for saying that God is most glorified or to use this text, Christ is most magnified. In my body, when I in my body at the point of death and most satisfied in him.

And I just want to make sure that you don't make this mistake sometimes when you talk about joy, you talk about satisfaction, you talk about the affections. If you haven't suffered much in life, it sounds light and superficial, those words. And you might say, well, yeah, easy for a you know, an American citizen, nicely clothed and well fed and surrounded with support socially and a good family.

And he drives a car and he lives in a house and he's got indoor plumbing and he's got refrigeration. He called 911 anytime he wants. They're here to put the fire out or to rescue him from the robbers within five minutes.

I mean, this guy is living in heaven already. What does he know about what what about how to magnify Christ in dying or how to magnify Christ in suffering? And I just want to say that I don't think I've suffered much in this life. But I read sufferers and I read my Bible and I talk to sufferers.

And all the testimony that comes back to me from godly sufferers is that I'm speaking truth. I remember one time in seminary, I read a paper on First Peter, which is all about suffering. And I argued this, I was just learning these things, and I argued that those who suffer most discover most of God and therefore have the deepest joy.

That's why I argued. I'm here. I am 23 years old and I know nothing.

I just I'm just trying to echo back what I saw. And that professor was very upset with me. And he said, what about Richard Verbrandt? Like you've never suffered.

There's somebody who was tortured for Christ. I don't know if you know the Romanian I'm talking about. So I said, oh, OK.

So I go to the library and I check out Tortured for Christ and one or two other books. And I find what I said. It's all over the place.

This is all over the place. And I wrote a little addendum to the paper. He'd given me a C minus on the paper.

OK. Below average. And and and I wrote this little thing and I said, Professor Blank, I, I know I'm an American, I'm a Westerner.

I don't know anything by way of experience. But when I when I read Verbrandt, you said he he says that in his sufferings, in these horrible 14 years where he hurt his feet so bad, now he has to take off his shoes when he speaks that he met Christ so deeply. There was joy surpassing.

And there it is. It's in the book. And he raised my grade to a B minus.

I guess there were other problems with it. So the point of that was, please, I know I know I haven't suffered as much as many of you have. And I live in a very, very abundant land.

And it's easier for me to talk about this maybe than it would be if I didn't have the leisure to study. But I do believe what I'm saying is biblical and those who've suffered more could say it more authentically and it would be true. So that's the first thing I want to do in my little remaining four part outline or whatever.

I forget how I set this up. The next thing is implications for your people. So if this is so, if we rank emotions, affections, satisfaction as highly as I'm commending for the glory of God, because he's most glorified when we're there in him, then what does that mean for your people? I'm talking to pastors now.

And what it means is that you should. You should tell them that this is the 24-7 vocation of their life, namely to pursue maximum joy in God. This is their vocation.

At least when I was. A teenager, I don't remember anybody telling me that. I was told, do the will of God and sometimes it brings happiness.

Nobody ever said to me, pursue it like a hungry tiger going after an antelope. Pursue it. Go for it.

Don't let it get away from you. Pursue this joy. And watch out because other joys are clawing for your heart all the time.

And if you don't set your face to pursue joy in God, you will get it somewhere else because your heart is a desire factory. Nobody doesn't want. Everybody wants.

We are a wanting being. Want, want, want, want, want. That's who we are.

God made us that way. We want. And either we're going to want God or we're going to want me to look good in the mirror.

And so if you don't set your people on this quest, go for it. Pursue it. Chop your hand off if you have to, to get it.

Gouge out your eye if you have to, to get this. There are all kinds of arguments you can give to your people. Let me just give you a few.

The Bible commands that we pursue joy, rejoice in the Lord. And again, I say to you, rejoice. That's a command.

It's not a suggestion. Serve the Lord with gladness. Come into his presence with seeing.

Don't serve the Lord any other way. It's bad advertisement. He's dishonored by gloomy servants.

Or you could say the Bible threatens terrible things if we don't. Pursue our joy in God, Deuteronomy 28, 47, because you did not serve the Lord, your God with joy and a glad heart, you will serve your enemies. That's a terrible threat.

So many arguments could be given a Passover, those and go to implication number two. So the implication number one was teach your people, model for your people that the quest for joy in God is their most important vocation. It's very costly, it will cost some of them their lives.

Because God's going to say to some of them, I want you to do this in Libya, you should do this in Afghanistan. I got an email the other day from one of our families in Afghanistan. And, you know, the 10 who were murdered a few weeks ago in Afghanistan, one of them was on their team.

And another one was reading one of my books. Don't waste your life when you shot. And his mother said at the funeral, which she said to my friend Ryan, that.

A sermon doing missions when dying was gained that I preached 20 years ago or whenever was sustaining her in this moment, and I read this with trembling, I thought, I am not playing games, you think you're playing games, these people are dead, dead. Because they loved like this, because because they believed Afghanistan is where my maximum, deepest knowing and loving of Jesus is going to be found as I spread this through a dentistry ministry, my deepest joy in their joy is going to be found there and it may cost me my life to pursue this, but I'm going after the maximizing of my joy in their joy. I don't know if you think that way.

That's the way I think. And so when I commend this to my people, I'm saying this will cost you second implication for your pastoral role. Let's look at Hebrews 13, Hebrews 13, verse 17.

Pastors, listen up very carefully. It sounds like this verse is about how your people are supposed to respond to you, and it is. But there's an implication that is crystal clear about how you are to pursue joy here for their sakes.

Obeys your leaders talking to the people and submit to them, for they are keeping watch, the pastors are keeping watch over your souls as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy. So saying to the people, help your pastors do his ministry with with joy and not with groaning.

For that that groaning, doing ministry with groaning would be of no advantage to you. You see the implication of that for joy. Pastor, if you are indifferent to your pursuit of joy in ministry, you are indifferent to your people's good.

That's what it says. It says, let him do this with joy. Let him do his ministry with joy, not with groaning, because if he does it with groaning instead of joy, you don't get any benefit.

So, pastor, if you love your people, that is, if you want them to be benefited by your ministry, you must pursue joy. I commend that verse to you for very serious heart searching. That's implication number two for your pastoral ministry, which means you get up every morning and you get on your face before God as you're feeling discouraged and as you're feeling low and depressed and lonely or embattled.

And you say, God, please restore to me the joy of my relation to you and my love for my people. And in all the embattled circumstances of my life, would you please give me a centering on Christ that is rooted deeply in him and joyful so that when I walk out of here into a committee meeting or into a hospital room or into the pulpit, I have something of use for my people. They don't need my groaning.

I know that's an overstatement because they do need your groaning. You understand, don't you, that you're a real person? They need to see you're real. OK, if you're having issues and problems and pain, they need to know that.

Let that show. But sorrowful yet always rejoicing. Second Corinthians 6:10.

That's kind of the banner that flies over my ministry. Sorrowful yet always rejoicing. Sorrowful.

There's not a day in my life I'm not sorrowful. I just know too many people and I hope this may not be true. I hope there's not a day in my life in which I'm not joyful in the sorrow.

So this the Christian life is a mystery, isn't it? I've experienced this so many times, but my mother was killed. She was killed in Israel in 1974 in a bus accident. And I got the phone call.

I was 28 years old. It's the most I've ever cried. And so I hung up the phone.

I have a two year old hanging on to my leg, saying, Daddy, sad, Daddy, sad. And my wife is looking with trembling. What did you what are you getting on the phone? I hang up.

I say, Mom's dead and Daddy's seriously wounded. They don't know if he's going to make it. Just let me be alone for a while.

I go back. I kneel down to bed. I cry for two hours.

OK, this is what you do. I cry for two hours. And God showed up in such amazing joy.

I never stopped crying. That's why I know sorrowful yet always rejoicing is not a contradiction. I know it.

It's in the Bible, and I've been there so many times. So many things to be happy about in that moment of pain and loss and sorrow. Implication number three for your preaching.

Second Corinthians chapter one for your preaching. This is not too much different from the first point. First implication.

But let's read it in a verse. Chapter one of Second Corinthians, verse 24. We're almost finished.

Not that we lord it over your faith. Oh, don't lord it over your people. Don't be a big shot.

Be a servant. Not that we lord it over your faith, but we work with you for your joy. For you stand firm in your faith.

Isn't this amazing? Here's the apostolic mission. Paul says, what am I about? I'm not about lording it over my Corinthian children. That's not what it's about.

I am an apostle. I have divine authority. It's just not about me huffing and puffing and wielding my authority in this church.

That's not what it's about. It's coming alongside and working with you. And he could have said for your faith.

And he didn't. He said for your joy. That's what you should do.

Get up in the morning and say, God, help me today to live for the joy of my people. Their joy in God. Implication number four.

The wider challenges of evangelicalism. We'll end with this. Try to give you a bigger picture here of why theologically, culturally, ecclesiologically, what I'm saying really matters in the big picture.

And I just want to give you two pairs of errors in the church today, which I think come from the failure to do what I've talked about for the last hour. OK, I think I am not putting icing on the cake of life in this message. I'm talking about the cake.

So it's really important, and I think the failure to prioritize passion and heart and satisfaction and joy in God, in God, in God through suffering results in these kinds of errors in the church today. Two pairs. The first pair is relating to right thinking.

If somebody begins to say, right, thinking really matters, right, thinking really matters, and they take it away from this. There's a name we give to that. We call it intellectualism, but the ism on the end, it's bad intellectualism.

It's the brain and it's doctrine out of whack, out of balance, hurting people, not doing what it's supposed to do. It's like a prostitute in your head. Your brain isn't supposed to do that with her.

The brain is supposed to serve the wife of passion for God. And if right thinking becomes so uppermost that it becomes dead orthodoxy or intellectualism, that's an error. And it's widespread.

I don't know how widespread it is. I don't know South Africa's situation, but it crops up in history every now and then intellectualism and dead orthodoxy. Then I said there's a pair.

There's another group who watched that happening. I don't like that. I do not like that.

And the pendulum goes whoosh way over here and you get anti-intellectualism, which is an equally horrible error. The excesses of charismatics, and I want to say excesses, not charismatics. Charismatics aren't the problem.

Excesses are just like excesses of doctrinaire life. So where does that come from? It comes from not getting the emotions in the right place so that their reactions like, oh, we got to think right here and think more and not be emotionalistic. And and so they go off and they leave the heart behind and and do all that.

And then another group watches that say, whoa, I don't want that. And they go off the other direction. And both of those could have been avoided if we have the heart and the affections nurtured and expressed in a mature, full, powerful way so that nobody feels you have to choose between right thinking and right feeling.

And nobody has to swing towards emotionalism or swing toward intellectualism. So that's the first pair. And here's the last one.

We'll stop. That was right thinking gone awry. Here's right doing gone haywire.

If right doing is not invested with right affections and emotions, what happens? Legalism happens. One of the meanings, one of the nature of legalism is a person who's who knows he's got to do stuff. God, I mean, the Bible has commands in it, right? Don't fornicate and don't steal and don't murder and love your neighbor and don't forsake the assembling of yourselves together and meditate on the word.

I mean, there's hundreds of commands in the Bible, and I know they're theirs. I've got to do them. What's a legalist? A legalist is a person who does them with no heart.

It's not coming from any root. These this fruit there. It's not fruit.

It's work. It's not fruit. It becomes fruit when it's got a root and the root is joy in God.

If we don't if we don't breed joy in God and we stay religious, we produce legalists. That's all you can produce is doers with no heart. It has no root in joy, has no root in resting and peaceful, delighting satisfaction in God so that you're not trying to impress him.

He's already regarded you as a good fig. He's just said, I'm choosing you for my own. I love you.

I sent my son to die for you. You're mine now. And so everything becomes fruit, just grows out of that kind of tree.

And when legalism happens and there's another group watching it happen. Oh, how many people have left our church like this, right? They're watching it happen. Look at all these religious people.

They do stuff and inside. They're just there. I don't want to be like them.

They're just doers. They sing and they read their Bibles and they go to church and they crabby. Just I don't like them.

So what becomes of those people? They become antinomians because they're going to react against legalism and then they go no law, no law. Off and they often do it in the name of grace. And second Peter's written people like that turn grace into licentiousness.

Now, how can we avoid those two errors? Legalism over here and antinomianism over here? That's rampant in the church. This is this is the emergent church in its worst forms. Pick your group over here.

I don't know who the legalists would be. Me, maybe in my worst moments. And I think the solution to that is get the affections right, get the heart right, make your ministry a heart ministry.

OK, what we'll do this evening now, having put so much emphasis on the heart and the emotions and the affections and satisfaction in God is I'm going to come around underneath tonight and say thinking and doctrine really matters because emotions or let's just say worship from the heart that is not rooted in right views of God is worthless. Let's pray. So, Father in heaven, I pray that you would work on me so that what I've said here would be more.

Powerful, more true, more transforming in my family, my church, my community, and then I pray for the brothers and sisters who are here that you would do for them what you did for Lydia. In Philippians or in Philippi. You opened her heart to give heed to the word.

So grant that minds and hearts would be open and that understanding would be granted and that transformation for the glory of Jesus would come and our churches would be protected from these errors and our people would be filled with the Holy Spirit and joy and there would be power flowing out and we would spread a passion for your supremacy in all things across South Africa and all the countries represented here in Jesus name. Amen.

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