

**Maximum Impact**  
**Pastor Ty Blackburn**  
**John 12:28-32**  
**March 30, 2014**

Please turn with me in your Bibles to the 12<sup>th</sup> chapter of John. Looking at this passage and continuing to unpack what we began to look at a few weeks ago. This passage, where we see Jesus really disclosing His heart to us, disclosing the difficulty in His own earthly life. Jesus was truly a man. Fully God, never ceasing to be God, but fully man, and all that that means, with a human soul. He fought the battle of the mind that we are called to fight as Christians. Last week we talked about winning the war within, and how we have to learn that the spiritual war that goes on in our lives is primarily a war in the mind, a war for our thought life. It is a battle in the arena of our thoughts. So Jesus, as the author and finisher of our faith, is one who walked this path before us. Who showed us the way, and who in reality gives us the power even today to be victorious. He fought the battle of the mind, and He was always victorious, always triumphant. Every single time He surrendered to the will of His Father. So He shows us the way.

Last time we looked at really what we are called to do. We talked about the war of the mind, the war within. The war of the mind is to be fought by first of all talking to yourself. You have to speak the truth of God's word to yourself, stop listening to yourself, and start talking to yourself. Then you offer yourself to God. You realize that the purpose that we live is for His glory, so you give yourself to Him, you die to self. Then you forget yourself, and when that happens, God does some amazing things. We talked about what we are to do last time, this time what we are going to talk about, and probably this time today and next Sunday, Lord-willing, as well, we are going to talk about not what we're to do, but why we are to do it. Because what we see is, as the text unfolds, we're given inducements, or reasons that we ought to take the war of the mind very seriously, and see it as a great opportunity. Even the most mundane, little battles in our lives, because the war within is something that happens dozens of times a day, probably more than dozens, we're not aware even of how many times we fight the war within.

I was driving the other day to some appointment, taking one of the kids somewhere, and it was in a time crunch, we had been a little delayed at a previous place, and we're running behind. We pulled in the left hand turn lane on Peachtree Industrial, turning left on Pleasant Hill, and you know that turn lane is about 10 or 12 cars long? And we're at the very back of that turn lane, 12 cars back. I'm thinking, "Okay, when that green arrow turns, I hope everybody is paying



attention, because I can make this light if everybody is paying attention.” Right? Well, somebody wasn’t paying attention, about the third car was not paying attention. The first two, [swish, swish] there they go, and then there is a pause, and sinfully, my heart, out of my heart came, “You idiot.” I don’t remember exactly what I said, but something to that effect. It was not that soft, “You idiot!!!” Like that. Yeah! And then I was frustrated because we didn’t make it through. The car before us got stopped, which proved my point. If he’d been paying attention, we would have been through, and the car behind us would have been through. But I was sitting there at the red light frustrated and the Lord began to deal with me.

You know, first of all, what kind of witness are you just having for your child? What are you saying about me? What are you saying about the purpose of your life? So I started talking to myself, and thinking about the Scripture. I was thinking, “I’m really frustrated right now. I’m discouraged,” and I did what we saw last week in Psalm 42, “Why are you downcast, oh my soul? Why are you in despair within me?” I mean, what business have I got to be downcast? Is it really that big of a deal? If we are late, we’ll be gracious when we’re late. If we don’t get to keep the appointment, we’ll be gracious and try to be apologetic. We will honor Christ and glorify Him. Isn’t that what I’m called to do anyway? Should I have planned better? Possibly, actually this time was one case where I didn’t really plan badly, but sometimes that’s the case. We can learn from it, right? But the point is, what am I here for? I was living like everybody in that line of traffic should be thinking about me. “Hey, that guy eight cars back looks like he’s in a hurry. I’ve got to be ready.” I mean, how ridiculous is that? But that’s what happens when the self-life is allowed to gain control, gain ascendancy in our thought processes, things go from bad to worse. The end effect is we are not happy.

We talked about last week, we don’t pursue happiness directly, we pursue holiness. But one of the things you get when you pursue holiness, is you get as a byproduct, true happiness. When you pursue happiness you don’t get it, but when you pursue holiness you get everything. That is what Jesus is saying in this passage. When you hate your life, you gain it. When you love your life, and try to cling to it, you lose it. Now I said that as illustrative to remind us what we did last time, but also to say that as we look at the rest of this passage, what we are going to see is that when you and I take advantage of moments like that, and we recapture our thought process, I mean sometimes we’re going to blow it like I did, and we’re going to have to then repair the breach. You know? “I’m sorry for what I said. I didn’t model that well. I’ve got to confess my sin to my child. I’ve got to be ready to move on,” right? But sometimes we catch it before that. We don’t have to apologize to anybody, we are just dealing with the Lord, but what happens when

this happens is profound. These are moments that though they seem insignificant, are actually tremendous opportunities for God to do something.

Do you ever feel yourself thinking, “I wish that I could make more of an impact in my life. I wish I could make a difference. I feel like I’m not making a difference in the world.” I was talking with a brother yesterday about this, who is close to my age. We were talking about, you get to a certain age and you wonder, “What mark have I made on the world? I’m not doing what I had hoped to do by the time I was...” I’m 50 now, so by the time I was 50. Well you know a lot of times we think like Elijah was prone to think. We think God is in the whirlwind. We think God is only in the earthquake, or in the fire, but in reality, God moves in very small ways, but when He moves, it appears to be small, but the reality is it is seismic in impact. And what we see in this passage is, because this is a moment in Jesus’ ministry in which, when you step back from it and look at it, doesn’t stand out.

I mean think about it, if you were talking to somebody about the great things that Jesus did in His earthly ministry, and in His first coming, what would you talk about? Well, you know, John talked about a lot of them already. He walked on the water. He fed 5,000 people with five barley loaves and two fish. He healed a man lame for 38 years. He healed a man that was born blind. He raised Lazarus from death. And so as you look at the timeline, you wouldn’t think this is that significant, but in reality, this is a chapter where Jesus doesn’t perform a miracle, but what He says, in winning the war within in His heart, does something that is almost cataclysmic in impact. You see it because God speaks out of Heaven in response, and the end result, there is an immediate impact, and there is an ultimate impact of what happens in this situation.

What I want to call us to do as we look at this is to see that as we learn to follow Jesus, we are called as disciples of His to follow in His footsteps. As we learn to lay down our lives, to win the war within, we are going to make the same kind of impact that He made in surprising ways. We don’t need to despise the small things, we need to see the small things as tremendous opportunities. If we could see things as they are, that is what we would see, because this moment, the bystanders that were around, if you were to interview somebody who was there that day, they would say, “Well, you know, we heard Jesus talking, and we heard this thunderous kind of sound, it was kind of weird. It seemed to thunder after He talked,” but in reality, let me tell you about what happened when He raised Lazarus. Or let me tell you about what happened when He fed the 5,000 people. I wasn’t there but I heard about it.” But this moment actually is even bigger than those moments because this

moment, when He wins the war within, He is confirming that He is surrendering to the cross, and that is the decisive moment in history. And this moment, had He turned aside, everything would have been lost. This was a moment in which the salvation of the whole universe hung in the balance, but it didn't seem like that big of a deal. Let's read the passage together, John 12, we'll read Verses 20-36. We're going to be focusing in on Verses 28-33.

*John 12:20-36 ~ Now there were some Greeks among those who were going up to worship at the feast; 21 these then came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee, and began to ask him, saying, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." 22 Philip \*came and \*told Andrew; Andrew and Philip \*came and \*told Jesus. 23 And Jesus \*answered them, saying, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. 24 Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. 25 He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal. 26 If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him.*

*27 "Now My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour. 28 Father, glorify Your name." Then a voice came out of heaven: "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again." 29 So the crowd of people who stood by and heard it were saying that it had thundered; others were saying, "An angel has spoken to Him." 30 Jesus answered and said, "This voice has not come for My sake, but for your sakes. 31 Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. 32 And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself." 33 But He was saying this to indicate the kind of death by which He was to die. 34 The crowd then answered Him, "We have heard out of the Law that the Christ is to remain forever; and how can You say, 'The Son of Man must be lifted up'? Who is this Son of Man?" 35 So Jesus said to them, "For a little while longer the Light is among you. Walk while you have the Light, so that darkness will not overtake you; he who walks in the darkness does not know where he goes. 36 While you have the Light, believe in the Light, so that you may become sons of Light."*

*These things Jesus spoke, and He went away and hid Himself from them.*

Let's pray.



*Our Father, we pray that the entrance of Your word might give light, and that in Your light we might see light. That we might be transformed into the image of Your Son, by the power of Your Spirit. We pray in His name, Amen.*

The title of the message is ‘Maximum Impact’, how do we maximize the impact in our lives? How do we make a difference for the Lord? What we’re going to see is that the way we make a maximum impact for God is to win the war within, in the arena of our thoughts, and all the different areas that we’re challenged in. The more that we do that, the more that we bring our lives under obedience to the word, the more power God exhibits in our lives. In fact, we’re going to see in the passage that, I mentioned that we really are given in this next section inducements for what we are already called to do. What are we called to do? We are called to win the war within, by speaking to ourselves, by offering ourselves, and by forgetting ourselves. But then He tells us not just what, but why? Why should we do that?

There are really two answers that are given in the text for why we should see the importance of each of these opportunities to do spiritual warfare in our minds, and we’re going to look at the first today, and the second next time. We’ll probably touch on the second just a tiny bit at the end of the message, but basically, these are the reasons that God gives. We do what God has called us to do, no matter how insignificant it seems. If it is in our thought life, and we’re worrying, and we overcome worry by speaking to ourselves and trusting God. If it is in a situation where we are disciplining our children, we are trying to help them with something, and we’re feeling frustrated, and sinful anger is taking over, but we learn how to win the war within, something dramatic is going to happen. It is not an insignificant moment. Here are the things that will happen, as we read the passage we see these two things will happen, we are going to focus on the first today. When we win the war within, God’s glory is revealed. And the second thing, we’re going to look at next time, God’s power is unleashed. We’re going to look at His glory being revealed. We are going to look at how it is revealed in the life and ministry of Jesus, and we’re going to consider how it can be revealed in our own lives as we submit to His will. God’s glory is unveiled, His power is unleashed. His glory is revealed or unveiled.

In the passage, when Jesus aligns Himself with the Father’s purpose, after He has that discussion with Himself, “Shall I pray this? ‘Father, save Me from this hour.’” He doesn’t even pray it, He wins the battle before He even prays that to the Father. “No, it’s His purpose I came and so Father glorify Your name.” The immediate

result of that is that the Father glorifies His name, because the Father does it in an extraordinary way in Verse 28:

***John 12:28 ~ ...Then a voice came out of heaven: “I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.”***

There is an immediate manifestation of glory when Jesus submits. Pretty extraordinary, God speaks out of Heaven. I believe the voice was clear, I mean I think that’s really what we draw from it when we see Jesus say, “This came for Your sakes, not My sake,” Verse 30. I think it was clear, everybody there should have understood when the Lord said, ...***“I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.”*** It was clear, the strong-sounding voice, the voice of God, and yet why didn’t they hear? It really just illustrates one of the themes of Scripture—God is always speaking. He is always speaking. That is what Psalm 19 says, the heavens are declaring the glory of God, the firmament speaks forth His praise. Day after day, they pour forth speech. Night after night, they declare knowledge. There are no literal words, but there is no place, no language where their voice is not heard. Some people say, “Why doesn’t God speak?” God is speaking all the time!

Another example of this, remember when Isaiah sees the vision of the Lord in the temple? Remember the glory of God fills the temple, and smoke fills the temple, there is an earthquake? He sees the train of God’s robe in the temple, and he is undone. He says, “Woe is me, for I am undone. I am a man of sinful lips, and I dwell among people of sinful lips, for my eyes have seen the Lord.” What are the angels saying before He responds that way? The seraphim are praising God, they are saying, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts. The whole earth is full of His glory.” The whole earth is full of His glory. His glory is everywhere. The problem is we can’t see it, and so people say, “Why doesn’t God show Himself?” What is really happening is spiritually blind people are saying, “Why can’t I see? Why won’t He show me? I don’t see anything.” Well, the problem is not with God, the problem is with you, and me. We don’t have eyes to see and ears to hear.

So He speaks like that, with that clarity, here in John 12. The Lord says, ...***“I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.”*** He thunders out that word for all of the crowd to hear, but they can’t even hear it. Some of them understand an angel was speaking to Him, they were closer, but they still diminished His glory, it was God. It isn’t Gabriel, the Father spoke, but some people just said it thundered. These are the skeptics, they can’t even begin to accept it. This is why it doesn’t matter what God does before the unbeliever who is hardened in his unbelief, nothing will change it. Remember what Jesus said that Abraham said to the rich man in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus?

Remember the two men go into death, the rich man and Lazarus the poor man? The rich man had neglected Him all of his life, and he is in Hades, in the place of torment, and Lazarus is in Abraham's bosom. The rich man down there says, "Can you send him to give me just a drop of water on my tongue. I'm perishing in this heat." And Abraham says, "There is a great chasm fixed between you and us. We can't come over there, you can't come over here. There is nothing we can do to alleviate your suffering." Then the man says, "Then please would you have Lazarus go and tell my brothers about the suffering I'm in?" That was a good suggestion, you would think, but do you know what Abraham said? He said, "If your brothers don't believe the law and the prophets, they will not believe if a man rises from the dead." That's what he said. It doesn't matter, in spite of the evidence, the unbeliever will continue to say there is no God. So don't be surprised at that.

But the wonder of it is, that what the Lord does though, as we learn to trust Him, and submit to Him, He will unveil His glory. A lot of times people won't appreciate it, they won't see it, they won't even notice, but sometimes He will open their eyes to see it. When you and I submit to Him, and bow before His throne, and we worship Him, and lay down our lives in these little ways that we have opportunities to each day, they are little in one sense, but in another way every time, dying is hard. Every time we die to self though, God's glory is unveiled. God's glory was unveiled in that moment when Jesus responded, but also His glory was unveiled in the fact that this was Him sealing His commitment to the cross. And God said, ...***"I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again."*** He's saying to Jesus, "Son, I have glorified My name in Your whole earthly life. Everything about it," that when He says, "I have glorified it," God glorified His name in the incarnation.

Now what does it mean to glorify? Let's take a moment and talk about that for a second. Remember we talked about the fact last time that glory is not an attribute of God like holiness, or righteousness, or love, or mercy. These are characteristics of God's intrinsic character, those are attributes, characteristics of who God is. Glory isn't that, glory is the impact, the impact that any of God's characteristics being made known have. Glory is what happens when God makes Himself known. Some translations, or when you read definitions, it will be the brilliance, or splendor, the idea is the light, the impact of God's presence. So glory is when God makes Himself known. So if we are called to glorify God, what it means is, when

we live in such a way that people then see who God is. That is what we are trying to do.

Jesus lived His whole life trying to show people who the Father is. His whole purpose in coming was to show who the Father is. This is why He would say things like, “Listen, the words that you hear Me teaching are not My own words, but the words the Father has given Me. The things that you see Me do are not the things that I have done in My own strength, but they are things that the Father is doing in Me.” He lived as a man, not using His own divinity, and deity, His power to live His human life. He lived His human life in dependence on the Father, and He kept saying, “What you see Me do, what you hear Me say, it is Him.” Now you and I have exactly the same calling. We are called now to live in such a way that every time that we obey the Lord, we’re to say, “What you see me doing, and what you hear me saying, it is Jesus. He is the one who has made all the difference. I didn’t used to be like this. I used to be someone who was yelling at people in traffic all the time. I mean, I never had road rage, thankfully as a pastor it is very unbecoming to go up and you know, pull a gun on someone, or something like that, or really bless them out, out of just selfish, prideful reasons. I wouldn’t do that. Not godly reasons, but I used to struggle with that a lot more than I do now, and there are a lot of ways that as Christians as we grow, we can look back and say, “You know, I know still there are so many things in my life that are a failure, but if you had only known me five years ago...”

Then there are moments where people see the difference and they’re like, “Wow, you didn’t used to act like this. What’s happened to you?” An unbelieving family member sees you respond differently in a situation, “What’s happened to you? You’re different.” This is when you give a reason for the hope that’s within you. You say, “It’s what Jesus Christ is doing in my life.” You’re giving Him glory. You see, glory’s being unveiled. When you and I submit, God’s glory is shining out because it’s His work, the difference that He’s made in us, and glory is supremely manifest in Jesus when He dies. That’s what the Father is saying here also in Verse 28: *... and will glorify it again.*” He’s saying, “I’ve glorified it in all the different ways of Your life, all of Your ministry—the incarnation, the glory of Bethlehem—I’ve revealed who I am.”

What did He reveal in Bethlehem? God revealed the He’s a God who is willing to come down and get into our mess. He cares that much. Does God care about me? Look at Bethlehem. He does. Look at Jesus in Bethlehem. I mean, His whole life though, think about the 30 years He spent in Nazareth or almost 30 years. Do you remember the story told in Luke’s Gospel about Jesus going to the temple when He was 12? They would go every year for the feast that they were supposed to go to,

and so this year they're at the feast, and remember they take off back home to Nazareth, and they realize after they've gone some distance that Jesus isn't with the caravan. There are a whole bunch of people caravanning together. "Where's Jesus?" So Mary and Joseph were in distress. "What's going on?" They go back to the temple and they find Him, and there He is teaching the Pharisees at 12 years old, and He said, "Well, why would you be looking for Me? Wouldn't you know I have to be in My Father's house doing My Father's business?" He was ready to do His Father's work, but basically they said, "Come on, Son. Come home," and do you know what He did? He obeyed them and He waited 18 more years to start His ministry.

Now, think about that. How long a time is 18 years in your life when you're ready to do something? "I'm ready to do this." "Well, just wait 18 years." Are you kidding me? I mean telling a young person that it seems like, "I'll be dead. I mean, by the time I'm 30..." but Jesus did that. He's showing us God. God is patient. God is meek. There He is the Lord of the universe, and He's obeying His earthly parents. What kind of God is this? What kind of amazing Lord of glory would stoop down that low? We see His glory.

Then you see it in His earthly ministry. When He teaches, He teaches as someone having authority, not like the Scribes. They were always marveling at the power in His teaching because He's the Son of God and there's His glory, and you see His glory in all of His miracles. We talked about them earlier—the feeding of the 5,000, the healing of the nobleman's son. He speaks the word and the nobleman's son is healed from a distance. The guy runs back and gets there, and the servants tell him, "He got better this time yesterday," and the man thinks, "That's exactly the time Jesus said he was healed." There's glory. Raising Lazarus from the dead—"Lazarus, come forth!" and the dead man who has already begun decomposing, his body comes back together and he walks out fine. All he needs is to have those nasty grave clothes taken off of him.

So He has manifest the glory of God, but then it's as if in Verse 28 the Father says: "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again." I have both glorified it but you haven't seen anything yet, because the cross is where—it's not after the cross that Jesus is glorified, but it's on the cross that Jesus is glorified. It's on the cross that He glorifies the Father. He shows us the true character of God on the cross like nowhere else, so it's the point of death that the character of God comes rushing out. We see His holiness, His righteousness, His zeal to punish sin, His wrath, and we see His amazing, astonishing mercy, and compassion, and grace, and love, and there it is in all its brilliance as the Son of God hangs on the cross.

Now, in the same passage, He says, “Follow Me.”

***John 12:26 ~ If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me;***

So as we follow Him and we win the war within, we come to the point of dying. Each time we come to the point of dying, God’s glory can be revealed, and it will be revealed. When we speak to ourselves, when we remind ourselves, “What am I thinking? Wait a minute, what’s going on here? I’m listening to myself. I’m letting myself get carried away.” I mentioned earlier that when you’re trying to discipline your children or help them—I was checking on something not too long ago, and wanting to help see that something got done. It’s like you say, “Hey, this needs to be done,” and they say, “Okay,” and then it’s not done 20 minutes later. “Okay, it needs to be done.” I’m really being a patient dad right now, you know? And then it’s not done, and 30 minutes later, “Hey, did you do that?” “No.” “What?? You haven’t done that yet?” Do you see the tone of voice and what that communicates?

Now, there needs to be discipline. Sometimes we need to say, “Son (or daughter), what are you thinking?” but there’s a big difference between what I tend to do, is I tend to get frustrated because in reality what I’m upset about is not that you haven’t done what you should do for the Lord. I’m upset that you are impinging on my life. Seriously, think about that. I’m frustrated that I’m having to keep dealing with this, because I’ve had a hard day, after all, and you ought to appreciate all that’s done for you, and you ought to appreciate me, and you ought to try harder for me, because I’m important. That’s really what I’m doing. I’m living like that. I mean, when my attitude gets bad, when it’s like a red light going off, saying, “Wait a minute. Wait a minute. Wait a minute,” then it’s time for some self-talk.

You can be Godly and disciplined and stern and even firm, but you can be kind and loving at the same time, because you can be unselfish when you’re disciplining. It’s not that I’m punishing you because I’m mad that you’re messing up my life. No, I’m punishing you... If I didn’t talk to myself first, I would have been doing that, but I talked to myself and I realized wait a minute, the issue is not what it’s doing to me. The issue is the Lord and His glory. And me? I’m not here to have to have an easy night. I’m not here to have an easy day. This isn’t my purpose. Where did I get that? Where did I get that the green light should be green long enough for me to get through? Where did I read that? Is that in this Bible anywhere? God says, “I’m just going to make your life—every day you’re just going to go from joy to joy, and like zippity-do-da”? That’s not what the Lord says.

What He says is, “You’re called to glorify Me. You’re called to walk the path of death. You’re called to walk through adversity and suffering and difficulty, and you’re to see these as opportunities to make My glory known,” and in reality when I realize, wait a minute, it’s not about me, I was thinking it was about me, that I’m supposed to have an easy evening tonight, or I’m supposed to have an easy day today—no, it’s not about that. It’s about glorifying God. It’s about something much more wonderful than that. It’s about me realizing that I have an opportunity to serve this person that I love for the glory of God, and as I do that, I’m drawing near to Jesus. I’m looking at Him.

Lord, You never lived like it was all about You. You never one moment lived it like it was all about You. You continually lived as if it was all about the Father and all about serving those that He’s called You to serve. Lord Jesus, You are so amazing. If there’s anyone who had a right to think it was about them, it was You, but there You are laying down Your life. And as we capture our thoughts, at those moments, what happens is we commune with Christ and a moment of frustration turns into a moment of unspeakable joy. Isn’t it neat what God is doing in this moment right now? He just called me to Himself. I was over there sitting there thinking, relaxing, enjoying what I wanted to do, and the Lord said, “No, I want you to spend some time with Me,” and He brings adversity in, some little difficulty to remind you, and it’s like Him tapping on the shoulder, “This can wait. Come spend some time with Me.” And when we see it that way, then how wonderful Lord that You love me enough to call me to Yourself in this moment.

I can give God thanks for the red light. I can give God thanks for the difficulty, and when that happens, what’s happening is something radical is changing in here. We always focus in wanting to change things out here, but the place where glory comes into a situation is when you change what’s going on in here. You can work out here til you’re blue in the face and you won’t get anywhere. Even if you get somewhere to manage things better, you haven’t really gained anything for the Kingdom, but when you work in here and you say, “Lord, the problem’s in me, the problem is that I’m not loving You and trusting You, the reason I’m anxious is I don’t see how true You are, how faithful You are, how loving You are, change me,” and in doing that, in realizing even—this is one of the most precious things about this is that when we realize we’re sinning, that we’re being so foolish and so selfish, the conviction comes, and that’s the moment to run to Christ, though. Don’t ever turn away. Run to Him and realize He’s already paid for this.

“You died for this sin too. You’re purging sin from me even now. You love me and Your lovingkindness and Your mercy which You have shown me in the cross which You have shown me in Your word, You are always saying: *Come*. Anyone who will make the Lord his refuge, You receive them. Lord, I need You right now,” and you run to God, and you run to God with a bigger sense of His love and His glory, and when that happens, the changes in the heart then changes the words. It changes the tone of voice.

It’s now, “What’s God doing here? What’s going on? What’s the real need here? Was I not clear on my instructions, maybe? Or is it laziness? Is it I need a challenge? What’s the need here? How can I serve this person for the glory of God?” The words become different, the actions become different, the attitude becomes different, and what’s really happening is that we are testifying that there is something—and like that change that happens—we’re testifying that Jesus is worth so much more than my agenda. This is how glory is made known, that my agenda, if I keep laying it down, it’s because I’m laying it down so that I can know more of Christ, and I’m saying in that to the people around me as they see me change, to the unbeliever who sees you in the grocery store, even if they don’t get to hear the whole story, they’re seeing someone who operates differently, and in your heart, you have the joy of knowing each time you lay it down, “Lord, I’m laying this down because I love You. I want You. I can’t believe You’re making me want You like You’re making me want You. I’m so grateful to You,” and Jesus becomes so much more precious, and when Jesus becomes so much more precious, your life, all of everything starts changing.

There’s a fragrance of Christ that becomes the issue. You begin to walk in love and you offer yourself to God as a pleasing aroma just like Jesus did. It’s amazing how powerful aromas are, isn’t it? Some of the things, the most vivid memories, doctors and scientists tell us, the most vivid memories of our lives are often associated with smells. There’s something about the olfactory glands that the data that it sends to the brain somehow emblazons it on the brain. Can’t you kind of remember some negative smells in your life? I can think back and my face starts feeling it. You know. But beautiful smells are the same way, and when you and I start loving Christ, and treasuring Christ, the fragrance of Christ begins to be disseminated through our life, and people can’t miss the impact of that. Unbelievers won’t always like it, but sometimes unbelievers will become believers. They’ll sit there and see that, and they will ask you a reason for the hope that’s within you. When we make Jesus supreme in our lives, we proclaim to the world He is so excellent. He is so wonderful that it’s not worth worrying about my agenda. What matters is Him. Every moment of every day, what I want is to know Jesus Christ.

I'm not a person that's involved in a religion, like Islam or Buddhism, but I'm a person that has been taken hold of by God. I know Christ. I know Him. I love Him. I want to walk with Him. I can't wait to spend eternity with Him, and every time we win these battles, we start having more and more of that become a reality in our lives. You say, "Well, I'm cold spiritually. I don't know where the joy has gone." Well, start fighting the battle again, getting in His word, filling your mind with His truth, and crying out to Him, "Lord, I need You. I don't even want You like I should want You right now, but please help me," and you get in His word and you let His word draw you back to Him. God is so good. He's so kind, so merciful every day.

That's one of the things that I realized. I shared this a little bit a while back, and I just want to say a word about it again. One of the things the Lord showed me during that time of illness that I had in January and February was how cold I was to God, and it was really kind of shocking to me, you know, because I was studying for sermons and things were going well. There was nothing obvious in my life that was a big problem. It was just that during that time of illness and kind of getting depressed and thinking about things, the Lord just started showing me. One of the things He showed me was my personal time with Him was being hijacked, or I had allowed it to be. I wasn't spending time with God like I needed to on a regular basis, a daily basis, just to meet and know Him. I was doing that when I'd study for a message. I'd be studying the word a lot during the week for different messages I teach, and you should always be trying to preach the word to yourself, but I wasn't just seeking Him for Him. And the Lord put His finger on that area of my life and really just pressed some serious doubts about my own spiritual wellbeing.

*Where am I? What's wrong with me?* I was distressed. And what the Lord started doing is I just got in the Psalms and I started reading the Psalms and pouring over five or six Psalms a day, and working through them, not just reading them quickly, but just working through them, and what I was seeing there was that the Psalmist often is in the same place. He's saying, "Lord, my heart is hard. Why have You turned Your face away from me, oh Lord?" But you cry out to God and so the Psalms were showing me the path is you just go to God, you seek the Lord, and what happens—in His word, and His word will draw you to Himself. And what drew me to Himself over and over and over again was His lovingkindness. There's a word in the Psalms that occurs 127 times in the Psalms, and the New American Standard translates it as lovingkindness. The ESV says steadfast love. The Hebrew word is *chesed* (חֶסֶד) and it means God's love, but it also means His love to the unlovely, His love to the weak, His love to those who don't deserve it, and it's His love that draws you.



You get in the word and you see that He's always showing His lovingkindness. "Remember me, oh Lord, not according to my iniquities, but remember me according to Your lovingkindness." That's what David says. "Don't remember me according to my sin. My sins are above my head, but remember me according to Your lovingkindness." And thinking about the fact that God inspired David to write that so that you and I could read that today and realize He is a God who wants to be called upon like that. It's not about our sin, it's about His lovingkindness. You've testified to me this is who You are. You've testified to me that this is Your nature. You want me to run to You. So many times the other things you see—shelter, refuge, rock, fortress—over, and over, and over God's saying, "Run to Me! Run to Me! Run to Me!" You're overcome with sin and you feel like evil's pressing in around you. "Run to Me! Run to Me! Run to Me!"

We do that, and when we start realizing that's who He is then we want to be with Him more than anything else. He becomes more precious to us, and then every opportunity where we're battling this war within is an opportunity for me to fellowship with a God like that. I can know Him more, and then suddenly people around us start seeing the difference. His glory is unveiled and when we start living like that, we're going to see next time His power starts being manifest, and it starts in such small ways. Just like Daniel, remember Daniel's vision of the great statue of the kingdoms of the world? It's a towering statue with a head of gold, arms and chest of silver, thighs of bronze, legs and feet of iron and clay. These were the four great kingdoms of the world representing the Babylonians, the Medo-Persian Empire, the Greek Empire, Alexander the Great, the Roman Empire—what awesome power in these kingdoms.

Daniel saw a vision where a little rock without hands was taken out of the ground, and this little rock was hurled at the base of that statue, and that statue shattered, and that little rock grew, and grew, and grew, and grew until it filled the whole earth. That's Jesus Christ our Savior, the little Rock, a Man who was born of a Jew in Bethlehem, lived in Nazareth, lived in anonymity. His disciples were Galileans. They weren't even good Jews, as it were, but that little Rock was cast against the kingdoms of this world, and that little Rock on the cross, that which seemed so unimpressive, brought down the empire of Satan and every kingdom that has ever existed. The cross triumphed over all. It is towering over all the wrecks of time, and that's God's way, and so God's way is still that way today.



When you and I die to self, something powerful happens. We get to see His glory and we get to manifest His power. The question is: Do you know Jesus Christ? Have you given your heart to Him? Have you seen the impact of His cross in a personal way? Are you trusting in His sacrifice for your sins, that He paid the debt for every sin that you'd ever commit, and that His resurrection proves that God accepted it? And if so, then treasure that every day for His glory.

Let's pray together...

*Father, we acknowledge that even though You have worked in our hearts to bring salvation, we still find a lot of blindness and deafness. There are times where we don't see Your glory. We don't hear Your voice in Your word. We become hard-hearted, forgetful. We're so grateful that You know all that and You knew it would be that way. That's why You tell us You're a Shepherd. You're used to dealing with sheep and You're able to be compassionate because You know our frame. You understand that we are but dust and You in Your infinite kindness are there ready to forgive iniquity, transgression, and sin. Lord, we praise You for who You are. We pray that You would increase our faith, that we would trust Your word more and not believe the lies in our own hearts and the lies in this world. We pray that You would make Your glory known to us, in us, and through us. Into this dark world may the Light of Jesus shine, and we pray this in His Name, Amen.*

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