



## **Plan Big** **Pastor Mike Fabarez**

Well, last time we were together, you might remember, we were in a very sad part of the Bible where sin enters the world and God brings a curse, we often call it, upon several things, and we looked at the first part of that curse. The third part of the curse is when God lays down some truth about the reality of the world, how it's going to be from that point on. And in essence, if I'm to paraphrase it, here's the basic gist of it all, and that is that everything's going to turn into a big fat mess unless you spend a lot of attention and time and effort trying to keep it from becoming a big, fat mess. Now, that's the Mike Fabarez paraphrased version of the Bible. But that's in essence what he's saying. And that is that I'm messing up, I'm cursing the ground because of you and everything in your world, including your own bodies, are all going to deteriorate. There's going to be this entropy, this going from youthfulness to unusefulness, from organization to disorganization. It's going to get worse unless you work on it. It's like your garage or your closet. Right? It just going to go to a state that's going to need attention and effort and everything is that way. And sometimes it's this particular time of the year when we often stop and say, how can we give some attention and effort to this to make this better, whatever it might be? Maybe you're going to clean the garage, maybe you're going to, you know, get a better job, whatever you're going to do you going say I want to give some attention to this and make it better.

And there's a great word for the effort involved in doing such a thing. And the Greek New Testament would employ the word "Gymnazō." Gymnazō is a great Greek word because we get an English word from that which you know, "gymnasium," going to the gym. Now if I were here even going to talk to you about going to the gym, which clearly I would not be a spokesman for that. (audience laughing). You didn't have to laugh at that. But if I were you would know what to expect. This is going to be an effort. Matter of fact, that's the way this is sometimes translated. The translation in the English Standard Version is to train, and the Bible when it says about going to the gym, like in January or whatever, to go to the gym to make this your new thing, it's going to be a lot of effort and difficulty. And Paul addresses this when he writes to Timothy in First Timothy Chapter 4, and he says you know that bodily training, it's of some value, but it's little. He says but you know what has value more than that is the phrase right in front of it. He says you need to train yourself for godliness. He says, for this has value in all things. And it holds a promise not only for the next life but for this life too. If you want to get in shape, let's worry first and foremost about your spiritual life.

So if you want to put your physical life off for another year, no big deal. So skip the gym. I'm in South Orange County and none of you are going to skip the gym, but let's just pretend you're going to skip the gym. I don't care about that gym. What I care most about is this gym, the gym of training for godliness. And training for godliness, if you just leave your spiritual life, it'll become messy like your closet. It'll just become a mess. What you need to do is give it attention and employ effort, diligent effort and you can see this thing become really good. It'll get in shape. And if your spiritual life is in shape the Bible says this holds value in all things. This will make your life better in every area. This is a very encouraging sermon. Can you tell already? Very encouraging. It's not like the last one, this is a very encouraging sermon. And



what this is going to do for you is it's going to hold out the promise of God. And God says here it is, the promises for this life and for the next. So this is a great thing. We just need to know what's the goal and how do we get there. And I got those answers and it's all found in two little verses in Second Thessalonians Chapter 1 verses 11 and 12.

So turn there with me and I know you've got it printed on your worksheet but pull it up on your device because I want to show you a little bit of the context which you should be begging for when you read the first three words of verse 11, You should say I'm begging for the context. Yeah, you will be. Here it comes, verse 11. "To this end." You should ask to what end, right? What end? "To this end we're always praying for you." But to what end? Well, I'm glad you asked. Let's get into the not so nice part, which we relegated to a guest speaker not too long ago. Verse 8. Right? God is going to come back. Christ is going to be dispatched "in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God, to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. These will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence..." Aren't you glad that passage was not the passage that you thought I was going to preach on this morning? It's true. But we're not going to focus on that.

Today we're going to focus on the fact that it says when he punishes them, he says he's going to kick them out then "from the glory of his might." They're going to be exiled. If you want to reject God in this life, fine. You're not going to get God's blessings and you're going to be removed from the keyword "glory of his might." And when is this going to happen? "When he comes on the day to be," here's the word again, "glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who believed him, because our testimony to you was believe. You trusted in Christ, you believed the gospel, and now you're Christians. And one day you just need to know, even though you're being persecuted now, you're going to glorify in Christ because he's going to come and be glorified in you. "So to this end we always pray for you." What? What are you praying for? Here's what he prays for. "That our God may make you worthy of his calling, that God may fulfill every resolve of yours for good and every work of faith by his power," might be fulfilled. That's what I'm praying for. And then he gets back to the concept, right? "So that the name of the Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ."

So we know the theme in this little sandwiched verse here in verse 11 is this thing called the glory of God, that God is going to be "glorified in us and we are going to be glorified in him." We're going to have this realization, this coming out even as it says in First John Chapter 3, that what we're yet to be it hasn't been seen. But one day we'll be seen. One day we're going to see him, be like him. But now when we can't wait to see this coming of Christ so that we can marvel at him and we'll see him for who he is. Everyone else, if they've rejected Christ, they're banished from his glory. We get to take in his glory and we want Christ to be glorified in us. All right, that's a great truth. The problem is it's filled with that Bible word, that church word that a lot of people commonly use but rarely understand and it's the word "glory," to be glorified. If I said write me a three-page paper on what it means to glorify God, you'll know right out of the gate that's the key thing we're supposed to do. If you memorized any of the cataclysms from Westminster all the way down, you know that the chief end of man, as we often say in summarizing theology, is that we would glorify God. Right? What is the chief end



of man? That we glorify God and enjoy him forever. So we want to glorify God. What does that mean? That's a hard word. Whenever we talk about glory, if we go a couple of layers deep on it, it's not just a passing reference in a sermon, I try to remind you of the root of this word in the Old Testament, the word "Kabod." Kabod is a word that means, and you can see the metaphorical tie in here, it means weight, gravity. The gravitas of God, like when Isaiah sees God in this vision in Isaiah 6, "lifted up high, the train of his robe filling the temple," he's overtaken by the greatness, the gravitas, the importance of God. Moses longed to see it. God showed him something of the gravitas, the greatness of God, the weightiness of God. God is not something to be dismissed lightly. God is the greatest being that ever existed. He's the cause of all other things.

And so the gravitas of God, talk about the glory of God, we're talking about the importance, the greatness of God. In the New Testament the Greek word that is employed is the word "Doxa." And sometimes that's related to the concept of the illustration or the metaphor of light, light, the radiance of God, the majesty of God, the goodness radiating from God. And all that's good and it's helpful. We kind of combine those concepts. We look at all the passages that talk about the glory of God and we start to understand some things about what it means, the glory of God. And then we hear the word we're supposed to glorify him. What in the world does that mean? Now, I could give you the first point of this sermon because the aim of the sermon is the very first statement, "To this end we always pray," right? What end? And the end is, verse 12, "So that the name of the Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him." It's about the glorification of God. I don't want to just give you the first point, aspire to glorify God. That would be a simple way to do it. But we're making it more complicated than that. I'm trying to make it simpler so that you understand it, but in fact, it will result in a very awkwardly worded first point but jot it down for me just to humor me, please jot this down. Number one, what we're aspiring to is this, let's call it this. We're "Aspiring to Publicize Christ's Greatness," and the words "publicize" and "greatness" start to combine the concepts of what we mean by the verb "to glorify." We want to glorify him.

What do you mean by that? Here's a word I almost utilized in trying to define this. I almost used the word "popularize" because in a sense that is what we're trying to do. We're trying to let people see it and for it to become positive in their minds. To publicize something or to popularize something is to expose people to something and show them the good of it. Like the opposite might be to stigmatize, to be known but then to think badly of it would be to stigmatize it. And if you think about Christ being stigmatized, well oftentimes he is. I mean, today's virtues and the morality of the culture, anytime you start bringing up Christ's values and morals, people start to say, "Ah, that's bad. Don't tell me what your Bible says, what the Bible thumpers say and I don't like what this whole morality from Scripture, that ancient text." It's a stigmatized Christ and what we're trying to do is to popularize Christ in the sense that we want you to see him positively. We'd like to publicize his greatness. And the opposite of publicizing might be to kind of overlook him. And in our culture we have that too, a lot of people don't even care anymore. We don't even have a biblically literate culture anymore. People don't think much about Christ. And the average person who skipped church this morning who is out in the fog, walking their dog and sipping their Starbucks, they're not



thinking about Christ, right? They're not thinking about Christ this morning. But we're supposed to be people who are publicizing Christ's greatness.

And if I said, hey, the goal for the next 12 months, let's think about this and aspire to it. Our aim is to do what? What we'd like to do is to do exactly what Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount. And he used an illustration for this, "Let your light so shine before men, that they might see your good works and," here's our word again, "glorify your Father who is in heaven." So we would like people to see something good about God through us. We'd like to put it on display. We would like to publicize it. We'd like to popularize it. We'd like for people to see that God is worthy of thinking about and that he's a good God. We'd like Christ to be elevated in our culture. We'd like people around us to know you're a follower of Christ. We're seeing good things because of that adherence to Christ. That's the concept. And whenever we're talking about that concept we need to go to passages, and I often do this in Romans 11, that kind of gives us in a very short verse the sense of what we're talking about. So let's do that right now. Let's go to Romans Chapter 11. If someone says, Pastor Mike, give me a verse that helps us understand what it means to glorify God. Well, here are the components that have to take place in your mind. Here's the essence of it. And it's found in verse 36. But before we get there, let's just look at the gravitas and greatness and radiance of God's greatness in the previous verse. Let's start in verse 33 because this verse is helpful and if you want to talk about someone kind of boasting on the greatness of God here is the way someone might do it.

After this great discussion of the redemptive plan of God and how he's going to come back to the people of Israel and have the natural branches put back in and all the rest, he says. Now, "Oh, the depth," verse 33, "of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God!" This is like the doting mother with the kid who made it into some Ivy League school or something. Right? We're saying you God are just incredibly great, "The depths of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God!" And then it says, "How unsearchable are his judgment," I can't keep up with this thinking, I can't keep up with how wise he is, "and how inscrutable his ways." You can't understand him. He's so rich and deep in his wisdom and knowledge. And then he quotes this Old Testament text, "Who's known the mind of the Lord or been his counsel." No one's sitting there figuring him out completely, and no one's coming in and giving him advice. "Or who has given a gift to him," given him something, "that he might be repaid?" He's not quoting anyone. He's not getting advice. He's not plagiarizing anyone. He is the source of the depth and the riches and the wisdom and knowledge. He is all of that embodied, so to speak. And, he's boasting about God.

And then here comes the phrase, very simple in our English text, very simple in Greek. Here it is in verse 36. Look at this. "For from him and through him and to him are all things." Now, first you've got to start with the superlative, "all things." God is the God, all things come FROM him and all things are THROUGH him and then all things are TO him. These are just prepositions thrown here in this text to show us something about the God orientation of it all. "All things are FROM him and THROUGH him and TO him." Think about that for a second. The guy out walking his dog in the fog, sipping a Starbucks this morning, thinking about how great it is to live in Orange County or whatever he's thinking, he might enjoy the coffee, he



might enjoy his pet, he might enjoy the manicured lawns of the walkway he's walking through. Right? But in his mind he's not thinking all of this is coming FROM God. All of this is sustained, even in my taste buds to my brain, to the neurons and the rods and cones in my eyes. And I get to take in this vista or whatever, he's not thinking all of this is coming THROUGH God. And they're certainly not giving him credit like all of this is TO God. Now, in the Bible sometimes in the Psalms, for instance, they celebrate those inanimate creations of God as though they're praising God, like the fields clap their hands or the trees, you know, are celebrating. Well, that doesn't take... The trees are just there being a tree. It's not thinking about God because they don't think, it's an inanimate object. But as it sits there doing the thing God designed it to do and the leaves are wrestling there in the San Bernardino Mountains as the wind comes through and someone goes up there to enjoy it and you see it all, it's like this is bringing glory to God. The goodness of that tree comes FROM God. God designed trees and the ability for photosynthesis and the nutrients of the soil to come there all of that is THROUGH God. If God didn't make that continually happen, if he doesn't sustain his creation then it doesn't take place.

So all things are FROM him and THROUGH him and then all things, here's what the psalmist does, he tries to personify the tree and says all things are TO him, right? This is giving credit to God. And there's the idea FROM and THROUGH, right? He is the creator, the originator of it. He's the sustainer of it, and therefore he should get the credit for it. All things are TO him. The difference should be between you and the non-Christian out walking his dog, sipping on coffee this morning is that you know where the good comes from, you know that God is sustaining you for you to have the experience of it and that you're going to then give him credit. Let's call it thanks. You're thanking him for it. And that's the fundamental outcome difference between non-Christians and Christians according to passages like Romans Chapter 1. You give thanks. They don't give thanks. Why? Because they don't know that all things are FROM him and they don't know that all things are THROUGH him. Therefore, they're certainly not going to direct the glory or the credit TO God. They're not going to say look at how God is great in this. They don't see that connection. The glory of God, the greatness of God, the gravitas of God, the brilliance of God, the beauty of God, all of that that is seen or experienced by you, you should say, that's FROM God, it's experienced THROUGH God, and therefore I should give credit TO God. It all should bring him glory. It all should bring him credit. That's why then it says, "To him be glory," greatness, let the gravitas be credited and ascribed to him, "forever." That's a great, great summation, verse 36 of Romans 11 of what it means when we try to say, I want to glorify God more next year. Well, that be great. But what do you mean by that?

I want you to make sure that throughout your life, which is going to mean you know where it comes from, you know who makes it happen, and therefore you know who should get the credit for it. It is all coming through you, you're displaying that and people are recognizing you're giving credit to God. It may make some people frustrated that you keep giving credit away, but you're saying, no, no, this is a God-thing because in fact it is a God-thing. Non-Christians don't give thanks. They don't acknowledge who it's from. This week I preached on rocks. Did you add a rock to your Nativity this week? I got several, by the way, since Tuesday or whatever day that was. I'm going to preach on Porsches next week, so... (audience



laughing) No, but thank you for the rocks. I appreciate the bag of rocks I got this week. I don't know what I was trying to say. Rocks. Rocks. Deuteronomy. That's what I'm thinking. Deuteronomy Chapter 32 verse 18. Now I can say that's non-Christians, they don't see it's FROM or THROUGH or TO. But you're supposed to see it's FROM and THROUGH. Therefore you're giving credit TO him. All things are for his benefit, for his glory, making him look good. Putting the spotlight on him. The problem with Christians, or in the Old Testament, the Covenant people of God who saw the greatness of God is that even us, this is where we need to tune up, this is where we need the attention and the focus and the diligent effort so that we can make our spiritual lives not messy. We need to glorify God, clearly. And how do we do that? We have to remember.

Look at this great text or at least listen to it. Deuteronomy 32:18 The end of Moses' career, handing the baton off to Joshua, about to enter the Promised Land. He said here's the problem. "You were unmindful of the rock," strange English Standard Version translation, but you weren't thinking, you didn't remember the rock, "that bore you." Okay. Rock implies sustaining the fortress, the refuge, water out of the rock. We got manna on the lawn, so to speak. We got quail coming down. God's protected you. Drove you through this and led you. Pillar of fire, cloud of smoke. All those things that have gone on, God has been your rock and you didn't realize that he bore you. Or to put it in the next phrase, "You forgot the God who gave you birth." So this sermon in part at this particular time on the calendar is to try and remind you, hey, Christian, your chief goal is to glorify God. And I'll put it this way you are to publicize this year Christ's greatness. It should be coming through you. You should be a display of it, you should be a billboard of it, you should be a mouthpiece of it. Because you don't forget where all good things come from, James Chapter 1. And you don't forget the God who bore you, the God who brought you into being and gives you all that you have. That's the whole point. And God loves to have his children experience those things, Paul says to Timothy, because then we can give thanks for them. And God gets great pleasure out of the fact that we're bringing glory to him by thanking him, crediting him, putting the spotlight on him for all the good he does. Because after the end of time everyone's going to realize it all really was FROM him and all was really THROUGH him. And they'll one day recognize the Lord that they denied. They'll recognize him without salvific benefit, but they will recognize it. God really was the one who bore us and we need to not forget it.

So this sermon at this time on the calendar is so let's remember, let's dust that off of our minds. If you experience something, great, you get a raise, you experience just a nice lunch today. All of this is FROM him and THROUGH him. And therefore we should give him credit. It's all now to glorify him, to be TO him. To him be glory. To him. To him be glory. Aspire to publicize the greatness of God all the way down to what we eat and drink. As long as I ended there might want to quote First Corinthians Chapter 10 verse 31. Whether you eat or drink, do all to the glory of God. All of it should be credited. If you enjoy something that you eat, it is to the glory of God, to the credit of God. All things are FROM him and THROUGH him. So that's the target. If at the end of next year you say, I think I glorified God more this year, I guarantee you're going to need these three things that are in verse 11. This is what we need to do. Here are the things that help us get there. The target is to glorify God. Great. I'd like to publicize Christ's greatness throughout my life. Okay, great. How do you do it? Three things. Numbers



two, three and four on our outline this morning. Let's look at number two starting in Second Thessalonians 1 verse 11. Great line. "To this end we always pray for you." What are you praying, Paul? "That our God may make you worthy of his calling." That God may make you worthy of his calling. And you could look at the Bible and say what is the calling that I have? You might say well, I'm called now to inherit the kingdom. I'm called to that. Yeah, that's true. You can even look at I'm called to be holy like he is. You can look at passages that use the phrase. And you say wow, I'm called to some really cool things but you're only called to those things because of your connection with Christ and that connection with Christ has put you in the family as a child of God. That's the only reason you have them.

So ultimately your calling and every benefit springs from this one calling that God has reconciled you to himself. And if you sit here this morning as a Christian, then you'd say, "My calling is that I have been hostile and alienated from God, dead in my transgressions and sins, but now I'm actually a son of God. I'm a child of God. I'm an inheritor of the kingdom. "I'm qualified to share in the inheritance of the saints in light." I have all the qualifications to be in God's presence. I'm not going to be cast away from the glory of his might. And you know what? Therefore all that goes with that, I'm a child of God. Now, if I think about that, I certainly am going to be led to passages like First Peter Chapter 1. So let's turn there real quick and let's just see the one thing that we should be thinking and let's get our second point on our worksheet this morning, the one thing I should be thinking that I know has to change about my life in the new year, if I'm going to do this better, if I'm going to glorify God more, if I'm going to publicize Christ greatness, there are a few things that need to be excised. If I'm a child of God and I'm going to live up to that calling, how do I live up to the calling of being called a child of God? Well, verse 14. First Peter Chapter 1 verse 14, "As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance." Now, when you were ignorant, by that you weren't alive in Christ. You didn't know that your goal was to glorify God. You just went around pleasing yourself like every little kid born in the world does. And you were just doing your thing. You did whatever you felt you could get away with, whatever you thought was best for you. All of a sudden now you're a Christian, a child of God, and you should be obedient and you shouldn't keep doing the things you did before. "But as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct."

Now, who was holy in all their conduct? Christ was. Matter of fact, he said everything the Father does, everything I see him do, I do that. I do it exactly the way the Father does it. We quoted some of those passages last week. As the Father does this and values this and decides, that's what I do. So the Son, of course, fulfilling all righteousness, did that perfectly. But we're called in this passage to do the same. Hey, you're a child of God. Live up to that calling, less of your sins from your former ignorance, more holiness. "Since it is written, 'You shall be holy, for I'm holy,'" quoting now Leviticus. "And if you call on him as Father," if he's really your Father, who cares about your life and your holiness. Right? And you look at him and pray to him as your dad, but he's the one you know is one day going to evaluate your life. "He judges impartially according to each one's deeds," well, then you ought to conduct yourself a little different than you did last year with some, "fear throughout your time of your exile, knowing that you were ransomed from your futile ways," because of Christ's blood, just to summarize the rest of where he's going. Christ redeemed you, reconciled you, called you



his child, sees you as righteous in his Son's righteousness, and now he's asking, please live up to that calling. Bear my name in that world. I've already called you Christians in this sermon. If you're a Christian, you bear the name of Christ, the perfect Son of God, and now you're called a son of God. And all I'm saying is, let's live up to that.

How do we do that? Well, you're going to have to get rid of these former patterns of sin and doing whatever you wanted. Let's put it this way. Number two on your outline, we need a plan, if you're going to hit the target of number one, here's number two, you've got to "Plan to Fight Sin Harder." You got to fight it harder than you did last year. You got to say, okay, this year I'm going to get really serious about this and we'll look at some strategies in a minute. But let's start with the idea. Go to Hebrews Chapter 12 once you write that down, we got to plan to fight sin harder. And why? Because I want to live up to my calling. I'm a son of the Holy God of the universe. That's my name. I bear his name. Well, I should live up to that name just like a good parent would want. By the way, read the Book of Proverbs. Nothing is more painful than "a foolish son brings grief to his mother." Or to start in Proverbs Chapter 10 verse 1, verse 5, all through the beginning of this about a parent talking to a child, there's nothing better than "a wise son makes his father glad." We rejoice as John put it, and he speaks metaphorically of his disciples, but he says, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth," right? That's what we want. Well, we know that as fallen human beings. How much more does God know that? How good it would be for you to bear his name to be less sinful than you were last year? That would be a good thing.

Hebrews Chapter 12. Let's start with that concept down low in this argument, verse 5, "Have you forgotten the exhortation that was addressed to you as sons?" You're a son of God, do you know that? Have you forgotten? Well what's that? Here's the exhortation quoting now the Old Testament, "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord." Well, I don't like it. Well, don't regard it lightly. And don't "be weary when reprov'd." Don't get a bitter attitude because you got disciplined by God. Why? Because you're a son. "The Lord disciplines the ones he loves and he chastises every son whom he receives." Do you know what the word "chastise" means? To "spank," right? He spans every son in his family. And so don't get all miffed, he says, because you're being disciplined by God, because you've got sin in your life and he's trying to get that sin out of your life. He wants you to be holy like he's holy. He wants you to live up to your calling. So you just need to know he cares about your sin. He wants you to stop doing it. And so as we think about sin and you can think of your sin, I think of my sin saying, okay, what I got to do is I've got to wage war against that. I've got to be more ruthless about that. I got to fight this. And here's where I get harder from, look up in this text, verse 4, "In your struggle against sin," here comes the author of Hebrews leaning hard on this, "In your struggle against sin you've not yet resisted," resisted sin, "to the point of shedding your blood." You know, I don't think you're trying quite as hard as you could try. And I'm thinking to myself, that's a good way to think of my messy Christian life that God would like my sanctification to get cleaned up here a little bit. Let's start with sin. And how hard am I fighting this sin? This is where I need to say I got to do this.

And by the way, I'm assuming that you've identified it. Look up at verse 1 in this great chapter in Chapter 11, looking at all these clouds of people who are testifying to the faithfulness of





God and he's worth trusting in and pursuing. He says in the middle of verse 1, "Let us also lay aside every weight and the sin which clings so closely." Now, that's the real concern, and that's the whole point of this 12th chapter. But he says here he calls it a weight because the imagery is this, bottom of verse 1, "and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us." So we got to race. Let's just assume that we're going to get the next 12 months on this planet. That's a good way to assume, even though we should expect it to be otherwise, I'm still going to plan like I'm going to be here for 12 more months. And I'd like to run this race with a lot less encumbrance. Well, here's the thing: that would glorify God. What I got to get rid of is the "sin that keeps clinging so closely." Take off the stuff that's weighing you down so that you can run this race to the glory of God. And, you know, if you haven't fought sin hard enough yet, and this is hyperbole, I get it, to the point of shedding blood, well, then we can work a little harder at it. And let's do that. And you and I are going to live up to our calling as sons of God if we can start acting more like God. And we've got to say no to sin.

If you're retaliatory, he tells that story in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus does, and he says why don't you be more like your Father in heaven who is kind to his enemies, sends his rain on the crops of the evil and the good. Why don't you act more like him? Then "You'll be sons of the Most High." Live up to your calling. And here's what I'm saying, whatever your sin is, let's just say I'm going to know what it is. You know yours. It's not all that unusual by the way. First Corinthians Chapter 10 verse 13, "There's no temptations overtaking you except that which is common to man." And I used to run into some sins early in my ministry that I thought, wow this is weird, right? And then I realize the more I go, it's maybe weird to me, it's not weird because I've heard a lot through the years. There are more and more people with the same problems. And then I think, well, my problems, I see those all the time in other people. But no one's unique in this. Whatever your temptation is it's common. But here's the thing. You got to know what it is. And you got to say, I am going to be able to do as that text says, to endure. "God is faithful in not allowing you to be tempted beyond what you're able, but with the temptation he is going to provide a way of escape, so that you may be able to endure it." God wants you to win the battle with temptation, and we got to get serious about that. And this text is chiding us. You know what? I don't know that you're fighting this as hard as you should be. So right now, I want you to think of the sin that so easily tripped you up in the last year, and let's think about next year and say, I'm going to work to have this trip me up a whole lot less because I'm going to fight this thing and I'm going to go to war against this.

Now, here's a great passage to jot down. Romans Chapter 14, Romans Chapter 14 verses 11 through 14. And the last verse culminates in a great passage to read if I had time. But the last verse finally says something that is so practical and you need to put this into practice in your own life. If you're going to fight sin you've got to fight the things that lead you into sin. Jesus says that in Matthew 18. There are a lot of things that bring people to sin that tempt them. Woe to those through whom they come. The world is going to be full of temptations to sin. Those are those I like to see as the off-ramps. You're going down the highway here of righteousness. You're running in the way of his commands as Psalm 119 says and here comes an off-ramp to sin. And I need to say, I don't want to take that off-ramp. It's the off-ramp itself that's the problem, not just where the off-ramp goes. And in verse 14 of Romans 14, it says, don't make any provisions for the flesh. If I admitted to you tonight, you know, one



of the real bad sin problems your pastor has is every time my neighbor gets a new cat, I look out the window, I see it, I take my rifle and I shoot it. I kill my neighbor's cat every time he gets a new one. And I feel bad about it. I feel guilty about it. I don't think it's Christlike and I don't think it's godly. I'd like to live up to my namesake to be holy like God is. And you've just got to help me. You've got to help me not shoot my neighbor's cat. Okay? I hope you won't say this, let's say, and this is how people sometimes are, "Well, you know what? If it's like 11:30 at night and you got your rifle there shouldered up to your cheek and you're about to pull the trigger, just call me. Call me and I'll try to talk you off the ledge of shooting your neighbor's cat." I think you'd have some other remedies that would just be logical that would come to mind, right? To think of David and Bathsheba for just a second, maybe you'd come over and help me drywall over the window that looks down on my neighbor's yard. That would be a good start. That might be a way to do it. If I can't resist this temptation of shooting my neighbor's cat. This is a weird illustration I understand. Cat lovers, I was going to say I apologize, but... Okay. I apologize. (audience laughing) I'm kidding. I'm kidding. I'm kidding. Dog people clap there for a second.

I'm telling you there are things you could do. You can talk about my rifle. So where do you get this rifle in the middle of the night to shoot your neighbor's cat? And where do you get the ammo for it? You load that... Well, yeah, I like to keep it just right there next to the window. And I always keep it loaded because you never know. I might see a cat that irritates me and fall into the temptation. "Make no provision for the..." Caltrans is great at blocking off-ramps. Have you noticed how good they are at that? This project will be finished in 2062. Right? (audience laughing) Sorry. If you work for Caltrans I'm offending everyone. Cat people. Caltrans workers. But they're good at blocking... They tell you this is all blocked. They put those pylons up and they all have reflective and they don't go off this off-ramp. Well, I want to go where that off-ramp leads. Right? But you're not even going to let me off the off-ramp. This is how you need to view your Christian life. You know the sin that so easily entangles you and you need to say I need to go to war with that, and you need to think of all the things that take you there and start saying, I know it's not wrong to have a rifle next to the window. I know it's not wrong to have a window. I know it's not even wrong to glance down at my neighbor's cat. But if you can't handle that and every time you do it you shoot the cat, well, then we need to think about all the things that take you to that place. And let's start going to war against those. A lot of things in the Christian life will not be understood by people because you'll be saying no to things that are not wrong in and of themselves but you know those things lead you to things that you know are wrong. And so you need to wage war against the sin by trying to deal with some of the off-ramps. It may even be that I know that off-ramp is off the I-405 instead of the I-5, so I'm going to stay on the I-5. Right? You've got to sometimes not even get close to that.

"Make no provision the flesh," or as Jude puts it we need to hate even the garment that is stained by the flesh. Not only that I'm not going to do the thing, I don't want to get near it. Some Christians are working so hard to get so close to the sin and try and say, "Could you help me not touch that sin?" There's a long pathway that takes you close to this. We got to start dealing with that in this new year. We got to say, God, I would like to be more glorifying to you in publicizing your greatness by my life being more holy, which means less sin. And



that means I got to work harder at this because I certainly haven't worked as hard as I could. There are some things you are going to have to say no to in the New Year because you know those things are going to lead as "A" and, you know, "B" go together. I just know where this is going to go. Of course, the body of Christ is a great help in this. But stay optimistic, would you, please? First Corinthians 10:13 you should memorize. You can see I have it memorized because you need to know that no temptation is unique and that God is faithful and he is going to give you an off ramp. Right? I should say he's going to give you the barrier so that you can stay on the path, to try and be consistent with my illustration, so you will not take the off ramp. And God is faithful to do that. First Corinthians Chapter 10 verse 13, always remember that. And the ruthless response, by the way, it's almost comical in Matthew 18, he says, yeah, the world's going have a lot of means to sin. Your hand or your feet might be the means to sin. If your foot causes you to sin, do you remember what he says? Try not to lean on it too much, that's what he says.

No, I love the way this is put. Now, envision this, if you will. Not for very long if you have a weak stomach. But he says cut it off and throw it from you. I don't know how far I can throw on one foot, but I'm supposed to take my other foot and throw it from me. Picture that. That would be a great title for a book on fighting sin. Cutting off your foot and throwing it. Nobody? (audience laughing) Some publishers are going to like that somewhere. The idea of me taking the means to sin, if it's my feet that are taking me to sin, I got to do something with my feet. Of course that's hyperbole. I get it. I get it. Gouging out your eye, cutting off your hand, cutting off your foot and throwing it from you. I understand. But the point is this, you're probably not working hard enough at fighting the temptations, and God's going to give you off-ramps. You got to take them. And sometimes the off-ramp is a lot closer to lane number one in the middle of the highway than you might think. All right. Middle of verse 11. You need to be "made worthy of his calling." And you've got some work to do in that. And it says, "May God fulfill every resolve for good." That seems like a very simple thing. But if I said to you, I'm your pastor and I'm going to pray for you that God would help you fulfill every resolve that you made for good, I just think most of us will say, well, I don't really plan those things. You need to.

This is a great line. Your resolve to do good. What good are you planning? Are you planning any good or are you just planning to survive and pay the bills? Are you just trying to make sure you get along, right? Just try and make it. Or are you trying to, as the title of this sermon recommends here is that you're starting to plan big and planning big would start with not only you fighting temptation, but saying, here are the good and righteous things I want to do. I know the "Lord loves righteous deeds." I know that. So what I'm going to do is make sure that, I am quoting Psalm 11 verse 7, I am going to plan to do them. What are the plans you have to do righteous things? Number three, very simple, "Plan to Do More Good." Did you do some good last year? Well, some of it you just kind of stumbled into. How about we plan it this year? Plan the road trip to good. What am I going to do? How am I going to do good in my family? How am I going to do good at my work? How am I going to do good with my neighbors and my friends? What righteous things am I going to accomplish?



I love the word "resolve." It's a great text. And one of the reasons it's one of my favorite texts. But it's the same word that Daniel uses about staying kosher in the midst of a non-kosher situation and being resolved. Right? He's going to continue to do what God asked them to resolve to not eat the king's food. Or even the passage that I quote at the beginning of a little booklet that I wrote on being resolved, in Psalm 132 verses 1 through 5, here we are remembering in this song of ascent is people were pilgrimaging to Jerusalem. They would sing this, "Remember, O Lord, in David's favor, all the hardships he endured and how he swore to Yahweh and vowed to the Mighty One of Jacob, that he will not 'Enter his house or go into his bed, or give sleep to his eyes or slumber to his eyelids until he finds a place for the Lord, a dwelling place for the Mighty One of Jacob.'" Now, God didn't allow him to build the building, but he had vowed and promised God this is the good I want to do for your glory this year. Think about it. And in this case, of course, before I go to sleep, I'm going to do this good thing. I'm just wondering how many of you even plan to do good. And I'm saying it's a good and godly thing to plan. And if your theology on sanctification is all about you just kind of going with the flow and thinking the Spirit, whatever that means to you, the Spirit's going to somehow move you into doing good. I understand the Spirit has promised in the New Covenant promise of the Old Testament in Ezekiel to move you and Jeremiah 31, to move you to do good. But you have to fully cooperate in this. As a matter. Let me make this clear. It's going to be work to plan and execute righteous deeds. It's going to be work. It's always going to be. He says, "make every effort," Second, Peter Chapter 1. "Make every effort to add to your faith." And then he lists all these virtues. It's going to be worth every effort.

Or as it says in Philippians Chapter 2 verse 12, "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling." Some say, "Well, what about verse 13?" Before we camp on verse 13 can you at least stay in verse 12 for a minute? "Work out your salvation." That word, "Ergon" is "work," it's struggle. How about gymnazō, training in godliness? This is going to be work. And it starts with you working with a pad of paper maybe and just sitting out there what good do I want to accomplish? Even let's do it once a month. What righteous things do I want to do this year? And then I can pray for you and your friends can pray for you, "May God fulfill every resolve for good." It's a good place to start. And by the way, Romans Chapter 12. Would you turn there real quick with me? We won't spend long on this point but at least let me say this. Good cannot be defined by just whatever your conditioned conscience thinks is good because your conditioned conscience is conditioned by the world in many ways. And some of us think that Christianity and righteousness are simply being nice to people. I'll bake cookies for my neighbor. Those are not righteous acts. There may be some righteous reason to do that but that's not righteousness, righteousness is not just being nice, helping old ladies cross the street. That's not the kind of righteousness that we're dealing with when we're talking about publicizing Christ's greatness. That may be involved in it but it isn't the goal.

And let me say this: you have to define good and righteousness by God's standards. This text is very helpful. "I appeal to you," verse 1, Romans 12, "therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God," God has been very merciful to us and gracious to us, "to present your bodies now as a living sacrifice." God, what can I do for you? "Holy and acceptable," two very important words, "to God." It has to be holy to God. It has to be acceptable to God. I'm not living a Christian life that's acceptable to my Facebook friends. Right? Or the people who follow me on Instagram. I

don't care what their definition of good is. I don't even care what my boss' definition of righteousness is. I have to find God's definition and say, I want to live a life this year that is going to be good and doing good that God thinks is good, and I got to work at that. I cannot be, verse 2, "conformed to the world," I got to, "be transformed by the renewal of my mind, that by testing," it's going to take some work, "you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and," just right, "perfect." That idea is my, and I wish I could re-translate this, I think it's in the footnote of the English Standard Version at the end of verse 1, that is my reasonable or rational response to God's word, my rational great service of worship. And the only reason I say worship there, it's the word that was used in the Septuagint to describe priests working on the Sabbath. But it's work and it's given to God as glory as holy. But it's the reasonable thing I should do is to figure out what God wants me to do and then to do it, to discern and to test and to figure this out.

So take out your pen, take out your Word doc, and start writing down the things that you purposed to do that will bring glory to God to use the shorthand. But all that means is we're trying to publicize and popularize the greatness of God in my world as people watch us do good. And both those elements, by the way, I brought up Isaiah 6 real quick, it wasn't in my notes, but the idea of him seeing the greatness of God and really his response is to glorify God by two things. One is "I'm a man of unclean lips," I got to fight sin. And God says, I've forgiven your sin. And then he says, "Here, I am! Send me." What good can I do? These are the elements of being taken by the greatness of God and we need to do both, fight sin and do more good. All right. One more thing in this, bottom of verse 11. "And may," let's put the subject back in, God "may fulfill every resolve for good and," God may fulfill, "every work of faith by his power." Now, that phrase takes me to verse 13 of Philippians 2. I said in Philippians 2 verse 12, I'm supposed to "work out my salvation with fear and trembling." But this is now called "work," and he adds these words, "of faith by his power." Which really gets me down to the last line of verse 12. If I'm supposed to be glorifying God and God is going to be glorified in me and I in him, "it is according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ." Of course, there is verse 13 of Philippians 12. If you're not already familiar with that it says, "For God is at work within you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure."

So I understand this. I'm not just doubling down by saying I'm going to fight sin harder and I'm going to put more things on my to-do list to do that are good for God. There has to be this connection that this work is a work of faith and it's supplied in its fuel by God's power. This is the grace of God, the available fueling of God. It's me and God walking through this life as I'm working out my salvation, he's working within me, "both to will and to work." This is more of the mystical side of it that some people love and they live in the mystical side of it. But you need to know the way that we get to this is to connect the work and the to-do's of fighting sin and doing righteousness with the words that come with it. And by that I mean in this text it's faith. But go back to the first chapter of the first book to the Thessalonians. As Paul writes the first letter to the Thessalonians, he starts out this way. That's why the phrase "work of faith" would be familiar to them because here's how he started this in Chapter 1 of First Thessalonians 1. Look at verse 3, remembering he's praying for them, remembering before, "God and Father your," now here it comes, "work of faith and labor of love and endurance," or steadfastness," your "Hupomenō if you remember sermons on that word, your steadfastness,



your "endurance of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ." Now look at the words "work," "labor" and "endurance." Those are the three words there. And then he says but they're all connected with things that lie behind it. You're working because you have faith in Christ. You're laboring because of love, your love for God, your love for people, and you're enduring because you have hope in the Lord Jesus Christ. Those connections are critical. Why do you want to fight sin? I want to glorify God, but you've got to glorify God with God. You have to be empowered by God. So there has to be that connection, right? I'm going to labor but I'm going to labor, it's a labor OF love. It's a work OF faith and it's an endurance because of hope, my hope I have in the Lord. How do I make that work?

I find this problem, particularly in Christian academics. There are a lot of academics I know who know a lot about the Bible. They can even make a list of things that they're doing and it seems like they're doing it for God, but they have no connection with God in the sense that they have no devotional life with God, because everything about their study of the Bible is an academic study. And all I'm saying is that there has to be this thing that is clearly in our text that your work and your labor and your endurance, you're fighting temptation and you're pursuing righteousness, it has to be done in connection with a real relationship with God. So let's put it this way. How do we get that? Or here's where we get it for 365 days next year. Here's how you get it. Number four, you need to "Plan to Spend More Time with God." Now, I know that's an idiom of our English language. Spend more time with God. What do we mean? Now God's omnipresent. Every day you live you're in the presence of God, "the eyes of the Lord are in every place, keeping watch on the evil and good." I get all that. But you need to focus your attention on God, and that needs to be happening devotionally as you connect with God. And therefore, this is an old saw, but you need more time in your closet, so to speak, without distraction, focusing on your relationship with God. And the things that are involved in that are very simple and very well-worn in your mind. You've heard it 100 times. You could stand up and preach on these things if you've been to church your whole life. They're very simple.

But we've come up, and I say we because we collaborated on this, we've come up with an acronym here. Here are four simple things under the fourth point that I got to be doing every day. I've got to be a part of this all the time so that I can make sure that all my work is not divorced from the relationship with God, that this is his power working within me, that I'm seeing behind the act and behind the fight and behind the deprivation of fulfilling of the passions of life. I'm seeing the relationship here, four things. And here's how we're going to remember it. "Best Practices for Sanctification." If you want to be tight with God, if you want to glorify God, here are the best practices for sanctification. Are you ready for this? That's a collaboration because last night my best acronym was "Big People Feel Super" and no one liked that so I got a lot of texts after that suggestion, but I conflated some of those and I like this. But "Best Practices for Sanctification." The letter "B," you know what you need. You spend time with God you better have this involved. What? The Bible. Right? Okay. Compass Bible Church. You better have the Bible involved in your time with God. It's the "Lamp to your feet and a light to your path." Not only to tell you where to go but to connect with the person. The Scriptures are speaking of a person and the Scriptures will draw you in to know the person. Not sitting on a rock and feeling your way to God. But having a book that is drawing



you, it's living, it's active, it's "sharper than any two-edged sword." It brings you into a relationship with the living God. You need to have time in the Word.

And you can flesh this out with some simple things. Are you spending time reading through the Bible every year? Get on our Daily Bible Reading schedule, right? Have you been a part of Partners, for instance, and sat down and worked through the basics of the Christian life, what the Bible has to say about that? Let's get involved in that. We've got a bookstore out here. It's not just for fun. It's there so we can dive deeper into the themes of Scripture. A lot of it on commentaries and Bible study guides. Let's learn to be good at handling accurately the word of truth and do it so we can know the person who wrote it and we can be in connection with God, the author of Scripture. I need more Bible. You know the next one, right? Best practice. "P." What does "P" stand for? You better pray. You got to pray. And I don't mean just saying I got this great prayer list and I'm checking off the boxes every morning and I make sure I pray all these things. That's good. But that's not what I'm talking about. I'm talking more about Psalms 62 verse 8, which I think I put on your discussion questions this week. But what a great line. "Trust in the Lord at all times, O people; pour out your hearts before him; for God is a refuge for us." The point is I want your prayers to be more sincere, more real. I'd like some more Garden of Gethsemane kinds of prayers where we're praying ardently because our heart is fully engaged in pouring out our thoughts and our feelings to God informed by Scripture, it's going to put up the guardrails. But my discussion with God, my talking to God, my prayer life is going to be real and sincere and fervent and ardent.

Best practices. "Bible" "Prayer," "B" "P." "Best practice for..." "F." Here's what you need. This is an old, old sermon outline, "Fellowship." You got to have fellowship. If you don't have connections with Christians you are not going to be the Christian you should be because Christians, according to Hebrews Chapter 10, are supposed to gather together so that they might "stir one another on to love and good deeds," which is more than just sitting next to each other in church. You need, as we say around here, your chairs face to face, relationships where people know each other. Some people complain, "Well, it's a lot easier when I don't get, you know, people involved in my personal life because this gets hard." I understand that. When "iron sharpens iron," sometimes there are going to be some sparks. That's okay. That's how we're spurred on to deeper sanctification. You need fellowship and some of you, you come only on Sundays. And you need to say, I'm done with that, I got to be here more and all the more "as we see the Day drawing near," which is the context of us spurring one other on. We need it more now than ever before, and we'll need it more next year than we needed it this year. You need to be involved in personal relationships in the church as we gather with one purpose to know this God and serve this God and love this God, and we can be here together sharpening each other.

"Best Practices for..." and the "S" here is for sanctification. "S." What we need is "Service." We've got to serve. And the reason I say that it is not only we have an obligation that we have to be good stewards, First Peter 4, of the gifts that he's given us to serve, we need to discharge that service faithfully. But here's what I've learned about serving in the church. The more I serve in the church the more I have to depend on the relationship with the person who calls me to do what God has called me to do. Like if I said to you, you know, next week you're



going to preach the sermon, right? I think most people would say, wow, it's going to change my week and you're probably going to pray more fervently and with more dependence on the Lord than you've ever prayed, because you got to stand up here and preach the Word. Or whatever it is you might be mildly inclined to do and God says now here, step this up and serve more people in this. You're going to find yourself depending on, seeking, communing with, connecting with relationally tight with the God who calls you to do those bold big things for him. And I'm just telling you need more service. Some of you don't have a ministry post. You have no job description in the body of Christ. You need something where you say, this is my role, this is how I serve, this is how I function.

If you've been through Partners you can learn a lot. That's like under the first one, "B." Best practices for sanctification, "B." Yeah, we need more Bible. You can get that going through Partners, but when you take someone through our discipleship program, I guarantee you your relationship with God will be more impacted by leading someone through our discipleship program than taking it, because that's when we have to serve and we're seeking the Lord in a whole new way when God is enlisting us in service. We've got a plan to spend more time with God. And in that, every time we get with God in the mornings we're thinking about, I want to hear from you in your Word, I want to speak my heart to you in prayer, I need to get to church this week. Today would be nice, whatever day of the week it is, and I need to make sure that I'm going there to serve and discharge the things that God has invested in me. Lot of New Year's resolutions, a lot of them deal with gymnazō, going to the gym, and I'm not so concerned with that. There is some benefit to that. But if I were to send you to the gym to lose 40 pounds, here's what I might say. If you're going to be successful and not drop out like most people before Valentine's Day, then here's the deal. You need probably to hire a trainer. A trainer needs to be there who sits there with his shirt nicely tucked in, he's not sweating, but he's making you sweat and telling you what to do. It's amazing that people pay money for that. But I do know that would probably help you stay faithful all the way to next New Year's Eve if you got a trainer to train you.

Let me say this about a trainer. You've already got one as a Christian. You're supposed to gymnazō for godliness. Train for godliness. And the Bible says if you're a real Christian the Holy Spirit's been dispatched into your life. Here's the thing about the Holy Spirit. He doesn't break a sweat calling you to be holy. He's got it figured out. He's never there going I don't know what to do with that temptation. He knows exactly what to do with your temptation. He knows how you should plan to do right. He's all about it. And the Bible says you have a trainer. The other thing it'd be good for you to do if you were going to go to the gym and stick it out. You should have in mind some vision of what you're hoping this does. You've got to have a goal. And you should say, I mean, as crass as it sounds, I should have a sense of what I'd like to look like if I were to get this all together. That would be nice. Well, we have that too, Hebrews Chapter 12, the part I didn't read. We're supposed to set our eyes on Christ, right? He is "the author and finisher of our faith." We're to fix our gaze on who we're supposed to become like. We're supposed to be conformed to the image of Christ. You've got a goal. It's hung on your refrigerator. Every time you open the Bible it's there. I'd like to be more Christlike. And the other thing that would be good is if you went to the gym with someone, right? That would be good if you had someone who if you didn't show up they'd call you out





on it. Right? It'd be good to have a trainer, it would be good to have a goal and it would be good for you to have a partner. And in church, if you come to church, you don't just sit here imbibing on this on the Internet, you're going to have all of that. We have all the tools we need. It's not about the knowing, so often it's about the doing. But the doing is basically rolling up our sleeves and saying, you know my sanctification is a little messy. My Christian life is not what it ought to be. I don't think I'm glorifying God the way I ought to. Well, let's get our sights clearly fixed on the goal to publicize the greatness of Christ next year in a way we never have before. Well, that's going to be less sin, more righteousness, and more connecting with God on a personal level. All those things are available, they're there. It's all about us prioritizing it and saying, Lord, help us accomplish it.

Let's pray for that right now. God, please, as Christians in a world filled with distractions, I pray you would lead us even this morning to be able to prioritize the things that matter most. Even as Paul said in First Timothy 4, training for godliness is way more important than any other training. Training for business. Training for health. Training for whatever. Nothing is as important as US training to be godly because in godliness it holds out a value in all things in this life and the next. So God, I pray that we will be more godly next year than we were this. I pray that we be the kinds of people who seek in every way to connect with you. That we're not just doing things to do them because we think it's the right thing to do, but we do them knowing that you empower us, that you're our God and our enabler. You're our "Paraklétos," our helper, that you are a God who is so ready to take us through this next year given that at last, the whole year that we're here with you serving and loving and producing and saying no to the passions of our flesh. So help us God like we've never been helped before to see more glorification come through our lives individually and corporately.

In Jesus name, I pray. Amen.