



A Clear Conscience – Part 4

Resting on the Immutable

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Well, I'm not a furniture builder. Or at least I didn't think I was till this last Monday. And I'm not talking about, you know, like the new father's rite of passage to put together, you know, a crib that comes in five to ten parts. I'm not talking about that, easy, I've done that several times. I'm not even talking about being coerced into going to Ikea, getting dragged in there, having my wife pick out a bookshelf or a desk with a hutch on it that comes with far more pieces than it should. No, I've done that too. I'm talking about a whole new experience of putting furniture together. It was an impulse buy online. I thought it'd be great to have this cool little end table next to my recliner. Carlynn had changed some things in the house and my old side table looked terrible. So I had to get a new one, which was cheap. And it showed up two weeks ago in a box that was really a lot smaller than I thought it should be. I was hoping it'd be like those vacuum-packaged mattresses. It just, you open the thing and it just kind of expands on its own. Instead it was a box, let's just say, with more pieces than you can imagine. More pieces than any of the puzzles in my closet at home. It was bad. I took my box cutter out and I opened the box and I poured out everything on my workbench and the pieces and the parts and the panels and the pegs and the cams and the screws and the hinges and the brackets and... It just went on and on and on. Out of this little box came a lot of little pieces along with a bottle of glue that was bigger than most of the pieces, which I thought, well, what is happening here? It was really bad.

I sat there on that Monday, told my wife don't come into the garage for a long time. I'm going to be out here working. So this will tell you how intimidating this was. I actually went into the box looking for the instructions and I couldn't find them. And I looked and checked and double-checked and don't be like the other services trying to tell me where to check, trust me, I checked. There were no instructions, there was no QR code, there was nothing, nothing. I took the box apart, turned it inside out, hoped there would be something printed on the ends, I didn't care if it was in Chinese, I just needed pictures and numbers and steps and I found nothing. I felt at that moment, like many of us feel about life sometimes, as I looked at the pile of stuff on my workbench, as we sometimes look at the pile of stuff on the Workbench of our Lives and think, what is going on here? And I know sometimes in that moment we like to ask God our favorite question. Why? Why? God, why? And I just want to tell you, I think that's the wrong question. I can say that on biblical authority. I really do think that is the wrong question you need to ask. The question is more appropriately asked by Christians, how? How do I go about dealing with this mess? What do I do?

Because one of the reasons that I didn't want my wife in the garage is I didn't want her to see her pastor husband take some steps backwards in his sanctification. I knew this would be a day of anger and frustration. I actually looked at it long enough to realize, after going on the Internet to see and realizing this manufacturer makes a new model of an end table like every week, I couldn't find the instructions. I even reached out online and actually posted something, help, does anyone possibly have the instructions for this? I tabled it. I had every intention of walking in. I had plenty of time. I got the tools. I mean, I'm not lame in the garage.



I can do this. And I just came back in and Carlynn says, that was fast. Well, no, it's not going to happen today. And I went on a week-long search and listed people here at the church. Please help me find this. And with all of our help, the only thing I could get close was one that wasn't quite exactly my model, but something close. The letters and numbers didn't match, and it just was kind of a, it was putting it together with the wrong instructions.

I finally tackled it on Monday. Don't ask me how long it took. It took a long time and I tried to tackle this project. And I appropriately cried out many times to God, how does this work? How do these pieces fit together? Why do I have so many pieces left over? Now, that was a lot of what I was thinking through the process. But, I want you to ask God how, because that's the right question and the right answer, I think, is found, a big part of the answer is found in Second Corinthians Chapter 1 verses 17-22, because there are answers for us, the ingredients, to try and work through the how do we go about this? Now you've been with us, I hope, in this series. We've been trying to tackle everything from verses 12 on in this chapter for the last, this is our fourth week now, the fourth installment of our study as we try to figure out, as it might say at the beginning of this paragraph in your Bibles, Paul's change of plans. Now, I know we've been anticipating his reason for the change of plan, but I got to tell you, that's not even going to start until verse 23. We've talked about a clear conscience, which is what I've entitled this whole five-part series. We need a clear conscience as we go about our Christian life. And we dealt last week, if you want to think about last week, we dealt with the intentions, and our intentions need to be good.

Today we deal with another aspect of it, and I will warn you that some of these layers are hard to follow. And I think all you can do is pick up a bunch of commentaries on this section of Scripture and find that it's all over the map. Because a lot of what you're going to hear as I read this to you is what I often quote and many others quote, because there's a lot of good truth here, but the truth is usually divorced from its context. Not that that's wrong. I can learn a lot about pneumatology and our soteriology and how God saves us, and what the Spirit of God is all about in our lives. That's true, and there's good stuff here, but we can't lose the forest for the trees. We have to understand why this is all here. So let me read this for you, and I will admit the first two verses are not too hard to understand in light of the context. And the context is verse 16. Let's just revisit what he said he was going to do, which is a little different than Chapter 16 of First Corinthians, because there's been some communication in between these two letters. But it says there in verse 16, if you look at that, he says, "I wanted to visit you on my way to Macedonia." So he's going to head to Macedonia, but he's going to stop at Corinth on the way, "and to come back to you from Macedonia and then have you send me on my way to Judea." So I was going to plan two visits to you. And as we saw, even in the verse ahead, I want to do this for your good. And we looked at all those good intentions and you ought to have good intentions. If you want a clear conscience, you better have good intentions.

But, he's now going to talk about his attitudinal focus on how he goes about making plans. A bit of a tongue twister perhaps, if you read this through, but let's look at this. The first two verses are not so hard. We'll get into the weeds here as we get to the bottom of verse 22. Ready? I'll read from the English Standard Version starting at verse 17. Paul asks this



question of him and his colleagues. "Was I vacillating when I wanted to do this?" To come to you twice? "Do I make plans according to the flesh?" Now he wanted to do this, he wanted to be there twice and his plan was to go there twice. Did I plan according to flesh? Now how does the flesh plan? I know how that is. You tell your kids, well, we'll go to ice cream after dinner, but then, you know, I don't feel like getting my coat and going to the car. No, we change our plans because the impulses of our flesh say, no, I don't want to do that. He says, I don't plan like that. Was I ready to say, "'Yes, yes,' and 'No, no' at the same time?" Did I have in the back of my mind when I said I was going to come to Corinth twice and bless you guys and serve you guys, and be, you know, a conduit of grace to you? No, I didn't say yes and then think, well, we'll see if something better comes around. That's not how I planned. "As surely as God is faithful," there's a line to underline, "our word to you has not been Yes and No." What does that imply? It's been absolutely yes. And as God was faithful, my plan to you was well-intentioned. My conscience is clear. It was purposed by good motives and now he's saying, I intended to be faithful as God is faithful, that was it. My plan was a faithful plan.

Now it gets a little confusing. "For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, whom we proclaim to you, Silvanus," which is just long for Silas, as we know from elsewhere, "Silas and Tim and I was not Yes and No." Now he's talking about what he's preached to them, right? When I preach to you what it is to be a Christian, I didn't preach like something that was, you know, maybe or maybe not. No, it was always yes. In him, it was always yes. If God says, "If you confess your sins, he's faithful," he's faithful and righteous "to forgive your sins and cleanse you from all unrighteousness." You want to trust in Christ and repent of your sins and secure your place in the family by responding rightly to the gospel, well God's going to take it from there. I mean that clearly is the work of God. I mean, the response is the work of God. God's response to his promise is the work of God, God is going to do what he says he's going to do. And it certainly doesn't besmirch our message just because I planned to come and didn't show up. Always in him, it's always a yes. "For all the promises of God find their yes in him." Now, that's an interesting statement, right? The promises of God which ultimately, if you think about it, to glorify himself through our redemption, to take sinful creatures and exonerate them through the imputation of Christ's righteousness. God did that. And because of Christ's work, the second person of the Godhead comes, takes on flesh, and he lives for us, he dies for us, he rises again. All of that, God is showing his faithfulness to his own promises. Always yes in Christ.

"That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory." That I think is the punchline and it's very cryptic as we read it for the first time. You got to read this a few times and then remember the context, we'll get to that. And then it goes seemingly even further afield. Verse 21 and 22. "And it is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us." Well there's a weird word that seems to be absconded and hijacked by other groups. Well we'll figure that out. "And who has put his seal on us," whatever that means, "and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee." Now, there are some things we can unravel as we're talking about the work of the Spirit and salvation and these are great truths, but what we often find is that people pop into this passage as I too do from time to time. We examine the bark on the tree, we cut off a limb, we look at the rings, we look at this great



truth, but we're not thinking about the forest. What is the purpose for all of this? We have to answer that this morning.

Let's start with the easiest part, verses 17 and 18. Clearly, he's trying to say whatever my critics might be saying about me, I'm telling you, I did not do this half-heartedly, right? What I said I was going to do, I intended to do. I wasn't vacillating when I wanted to come to you twice, and I didn't plan to come to you twice just according to the flesh like other people who are just driven and tossed by their passions and they don't feel like doing something they said then they don't do it. No, "As surely as God is faithful, our word to you has not been," yeah, I'll do it, but you know, you never know. No, my heart, my mouth, my intention, everything was lined up. My conscience is clear "as God is faithful." Now, that's an interesting statement because we know something about God in the Bible. And I could point to propositional indicative statements throughout the Scripture that say this, but God is faithful. And we know that even embedded in verses 19 and 20, well, even the plan of redemption, God is faithful to do what he said he's going to do. Now we're banking on what he hasn't yet done in our redemption, but we know in the past in sending his Son he's been faithful. And I can look at some of that, the overarching prophecies of redemption. I could look at even the statements of God himself saying he's a faithful God. But what I need to remember is that God is a faithful God and Paul is saying that's why I make plans and I intend to be faithful when I make plans.

What's ironic, as I tried to point this out in our first point here this morning, is that he's saying all this when he DIDN'T do what he said he was going to do. And he's not going to get to the explanation, at least not fully to the Corinthians, until verse 23. But in verses 17 through 22, he's going to really kind of shadow box with the critics who are saying you can't trust the Apostle Paul. Critics are saying, "He didn't really mean it. He's just pulling one over on you. He's, you know, I mean, he might be a charlatan. He tells you things and then he doesn't do them. He doesn't really mean what he says." So, Paul is going to deal with that before he gives them the reason. But today, I at least want to say, well, he's looking at God's faithfulness and saying, that's what I'm striving to be, and that'd be a good place for us to start. When you look at all the stuff on the Workbench of your Life, I want you to say my goal is to always be faithful, as faithful as God. Now, I know you can't be as faithful as God, but that's our goal. That's the benchmark. Number one. "Work to Imitate God's Faithfulness." It says God's faithful. When I make a plan, it's yes because I plan to do it. It's not yes and no. It's not vacillation. It's not going back and forth. Work to imitate God's faithfulness.

Now, if you're going to work to imitate God's faithfulness, which I think is not just your assignment for this week, it's the assignment for the entirety of your Christian life. As you endure and persevere to the end you should be saying I want to be faithful because God is faithful. I want to imitate that communicable attribute of God. And that should be your endeavor. And if you're going to do that, you better look in the Bible and try and find reminders of how faithful God is. I could go to the propositional statements that just indicatively say God is faithful. We could look at a lot of those and I can prove that to you but I think you're past all that and you know that. You know God reveals himself as faithful, but I going to show you there's something that we're always continually in touch with that speaks to this as well.



Now let me quote a passage for you that you're familiar with, I assume. If not, you might want to turn there. Romans Chapter 1, as he begins this discussion of the first theme in Romans in earnest. You can take a look at what he says here in Romans Chapter 1 beginning in verse 18 talking about the coming wrath of God. And he says, you know, that wrath of God is coming against people who suppress the truth and unrighteousness, and you're going to throw a flag on the play, as many people do when I share the gospel with them. And they say, well, there's a lot of people that don't know the truth of God, so how can they be held responsible for not keeping the truth of God? And he's going to respond to that. Anticipating that objection, he says this, verse 19. "For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them." Those are some great statements. God has shown them what he expects of them. It's plain to them who God is. If the whole crescendo of this section is, y'all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, he's going to say, well, how would I know what the glory God is?

It's shown to them. How's it shown to him? Verse 20, "For his invisible attributes," and here's something that's invisible, God is faithful. Yeah, it's invisible in the sense that I can't see, you know, the label on God's coat that says he's faithful. I can't see that. But I know that God is faithful. He's revealed himself to be faithful. Now I'm going to have to look to things that he's done. Promise and fulfillment. That's one way I look at his faithfulness. But he doesn't go there. He's saying, I know the objection is, what about people who don't know the truth? Well, they do know. They know the basic truths. They know his invisible attributes. Namely, he starts with this one because this is basically saying there is a God. "Eternal power." Right? Even just sitting back and thinking of the philosophers who preceded the New Testament era, they're thinking about the ultimate cause of the universe. And all you have to do is live outdoors more than we do to start to respect the power of creation reflecting the power of God. And he says those invisible actions, let's start with his eternal power and his "divine nature." That means his perfect divine God nature which under that rubric, under that umbrella, you could put a lot of different things that we would list as the attributes of God. They "have been clearly perceived." God's not holding anything back from us. "Ever since the creation of the world in the things that have been made," so that, your little imaginary guy who is living out in the jungle, "they're without excuse." Especially if they're out in the jungle, they certainly know this. God is powerful and then they can start to chronicle within nature, as it's laid out in passages like Psalm 19, a lot of the attributes of God are on display.

Okay, y'all know that, right? Nobody gasped, no one passed out. You know that truth. Go to Jeremiah 5 with me. Our topic today is God's faithfulness. I just want to think about that, God's faithfulness. It is on display and his power. That I guess is at the top of the list. I mean, all you got to do is see a volcano explode. All you got to do is be in the middle of an 8.0 earthquake. You just have to see a typhoon or a hurricane. You'll start to say, wow, this God who controls the universe must be pretty powerful. Jeremiah 5, start in verse 22, let's read a few verses here. "Do you not fear me?" declares Yahweh, "declares the Lord. Do you not tremble before me?" Well, if you're caught out on a ship on the sea on the Mediterranean or the Pacific and there's a big storm, well, then you know what? You'd start to cry out to God as often happens. Just ask the sailors who toted Jonah around. You're going to say, wow, I need



to tremble before the Lord. "I place," now he's going to say something here, "I place the sand as a boundary for the sea, a perpetual barrier that it cannot pass; though the waves toss, they can't prevail; though they roar, they cannot pass over it." Now Al Gore's musings notwithstanding, okay? The shoreline's a pretty reliable thing. You can build a highway there. You can buy some property there. I mean, things might burn down, and maybe if you build it up on a plateau that's overlooking a cliff that's overlooking the ocean you might have some problems there with some erosion, but here's the pretty clear thing, we can make maps, we can build roads, and we know where the shoreline is. There's a lot of water and a lot of power and there are a lot of storms, a lot of waves, a lot of tumult out there, but, you know, here's the thing, God's pretty faithful about saying here's the ocean, here is the land. We can see that.

Verse 23, "But this people," talk about transgression. Well, the ocean doesn't transgress the shore. It beats up against it, but it knows its place. "But this people has a stubborn and rebellious heart; they've turned aside and they've gone away. They do not say," verse 24, "in their hearts, 'Let us fear the Lord our God,'" who by the way, let's speak of his faithfulness again, "who gives rain in its season, the autumn rain and the spring rain, and keeps for us the weeks appointed for the harvest." This was written in the sixth century before Christ, six hundred years roughly before Christ. This was written 2,600 years ago, and yet farmers today in Central California are on the same schedule that they were on in the farmers of the day here in Judah, the same schedule. God is faithful. They may not have understood all that you think you understand about the creation of the world, like this huge satellite that floats around and creates the tides and gives us all kinds of things that relate to some of the weather patterns on this earth. They might not have understood meteorology the way that people do today, but they certainly knew this, right? We're a year from where we used to be and it must be harvest time again. And things continue on. You want to try to measure something about the microscopic entropy in time. Well, okay, you can try and do all that. But the bottom line is things have been going on with spring rains and autumn rains and time for harvest as they have been from the beginning. So we know, here's something about God that we know, he is a faithful God. Phases of the moon are faithful. The sunrise is faithful. The harvest time is faithful, the boundaries of where the sea stops and the land starts, faithful.

Now the whole crescendo of the problem in Romans by Chapter 3 is that we've all sinned. "We fall short of the glory of God." Here's one thing I want you to think about. How faithful is God just in the natural theology, the declaration of God's faithfulness, and then how faithful are you? And all I'm telling you is the delta between those two, the gap between your faithfulness and God's faithfulness, well, I can't do anything straight for 26 minutes, let alone 2,600 years. I need to learn to be faithful. I need to be in humble respect of God's faithfulness. I need to study his faithfulness, and I might even quote this, Genesis Chapter 32, when Jacob was there and he was thinking about the third generation of God's faithfulness to the covenant that God made with Abraham, Jacob looks back at Abraham, his grandfather, and says, look how God was faithful to him. Then, hey, let's look at his son, Isaac, and how he was faithful. And now he says, look at how he's faithful to me. Let me just quote that passage to you, Genesis 32 verse 10. He says, "I'm not worthy of the least of all of these deeds of



steadfast love and all the faithfulness you've shown your servant." That picture of humble recognition of God's faithfulness, I hope you recognize that.

How many times have you gone through the cycle of whatever it might be, even waking up every morning, shoving breakfast in your mouth and going off to work, getting your paycheck twice a month or how often it comes and how God has provided for you and just all the things that go beyond all the artificial means of provision, but all the geographic and the cosmological and metalogical provision of your life. It happens all the time. God is faithful. And even if you think on the spiritual side of things, you think about Jacob saying look at my grandfather and my father and now me. And then he's thinking of his kids in this passage. My kids, God is faithful. I want you to study the faithfulness of God and wherever it pops out in your reading of the Bible, your studying of the Bible, I want to say, wow, I'm a recipient of the faithfulness. I can depend on God, not just in his soteriological promises in prophecy. But I can even look at the world that he's made and I can see something about how I fall short and I need to stretch. Here's a good word for our sanctification. I need to work. I need to work hard to imitate the faithfulness of God. And I'd like to be faithful. When I say something, I want people to count on me. Like I can say, I'll meet you tomorrow morning when the sun rises. I want to be as faithful as God. Now, I can't humanly be as faithful as God, humanly speaking I can't be, but I'm going to strive to be as faithful as I can.

Now again, the exception here is that Paul isn't being faithful to his word and he's about to explain why. His intentions were good, his motives were good and he had good reason for not being faithful to that, but he says that's my intention. As God is faithful, when I say something I'm faithfully planning to do it. And if you're a young person in this room, I just got to stop and say, and I mean it, junior high, high school, college, if you would just be faithful in your generation to be where you say you're going to be at the time you say you're going to be there, that you're going to finish things you say are going to start, whether it's a program at school or a team that you've joined or some season in soccer. I don't care what it is, I guarantee you'll be a standout in your generation because we're living in very unfaithful times. The next generation needs to learn to be faithful. Can I trust you when you say you're going to do something? Or do I think, like the critics of Paul thought, is it true of you that when you say yes, I got to say, well, we'll see. Well, I don't know, maybe it's yes in his mouth but no in his heart, I don't know.

Now, let's start vertically, because that's the most important kind of faithfulness you need to reflect. God has been faithful to you. He's faithful in this world. You should be faithful to him. And maybe I'll quote the last chapter of Joshua as Joshua ends his ministry and you know this. Let me read it for you. At the end of Joshua, he says in Chapter 24 verse 14, he says, guys, I need you now that we've settled in Canaan, I want you to fear the Lord. That's where it starts. The power of God, you ought to be recognizing humbly that you're small and he's big, that he's powerful and you're not. You didn't choose when to be born and God can snuff your life out today if he wanted to. I've humbly served him in fear. "Serve him," in fear and "in sincerity," that's what Paul's trying to highlight here and here's the next thing, "and in faithfulness." Be faithful. And that means you got to put away the gods of your fathers that they worship beyond the river and in Egypt. Stop, you need to serve the Lord. How? With



"sincerity and faithfulness." You fear him, I'm subjected to him, he's in charge and therefore I want to be faithful to him and whatever the Lord says I want to do that. And when we commit to do it, vertically, we ought to do it.

You know, God calls you to do some things. He says you should not forsake the assembling of yourselves together "as is the habit of some," you shouldn't do that. That's codified in the Word of God. If he says you should be faithful in coming to church, you should be faithful in coming to church. If he says you're a good steward of what I've invested in you, you ought to put that to work to serve the body of Christ, First Corinthians 12, First Peter Chapter 5, then you should be faithful, you should have a ministry post, you should be faithfully serving every week. If he says you ought to support financially where you're being fed spiritually, well, then you should do it. It doesn't matter. You got to be faithful. You got to do it! You can serve the gods of your fathers, right? If it was the gods across the river and in Egypt, they just do whatever they want to do. They plan and they serve according to other gods, and other gods are fashioned to be able to meet my appetites where it's a projection of what I want. You can serve yourself, which is really what it is to serve another god, or you can serve the real God and do what he says. If he says you need to be praying, praying always, praying every day, pray without ceasing, as a habitual, like a hacking cough, you ought to be coughing up thoughts to God. If he says that, First Thessalonians Chapter 5, then you should be faithful to do what he says.

If he tells you to share the gospel, that you're an ambassador, you ought to speak up for him, you ought to be his representative in this world, then you better speak up to non-Christians about the fact that you're a Christian. You ought to represent him in this world. Are you following this? Everything vertically, you ought to think about, God I want to be as faithful as the sunrise. I'd like to be as faithful as the phases of the moon. I'd like to be as faithful as the seasons of the year. You can look at me, and if it's Sunday, it's time to go to church. I'm going. If it's time for this, that, or the other, if you've asked me to do it, I'm there. I'm going to do it. And I'm going to commit myself to doing it because I'm going to say yes. Not yes and no, I'm going to say yes. That's faithfulness to God. He's never going to ask you for things he's not going to provide you with the means to accomplish them. You need to understand that. Don't say, well, I can't. You can. God would not ask you to do something that he's not going to provide what you need to do it. Everything, service, giving, being a part of something habitually and continually, engaging in spiritual disciplines. He's going to give you what you mean. You just need to commit yourself to be faithful.

And we need to be faithful to each other. Jot this down. Psalm 15 verses 2 and 4. I say verses 2 and 4 because we're set up in verse 1 with people who are going to have intimacy with God. We're going to know God. We're going to relate to God. We're going to be godly people. In verse 2, it says we need to "speak the truth in our hearts." If you want a good phrase that represents what we've just read in the first two verses of our study today, in verses 17 and 18, it's that he's speaking the truth in his heart. Nothing comes out of his mouth that he doesn't mean in his heart. Like he says earlier, everything I've written, everything I've said, it's what I mean. And he says, I planned to come to you twice. I meant it. I speak the truth in my heart and it comes out of my mouth. That's what I meant. And you need to be someone who speaks



the truth in your heart. Now, it gets down in verse 4, the bottom of verse 4 says, you commit or you "swear even to your own hurt and you don't change." Well, I was planning on finishing this course of study, but it got hard. Well, I was going to go and meet you Saturday night for that meal, but you know something else came up. That's not how it works. Are you a person of your word to other people? That's how this needs to work. Of course, God is my first priority. I'm faithful to him, but I've got to be faithful to the people around me, vertical and horizontal faithfulness. I'm just saying, we need to learn of God's faithfulness humbly, and we need to know that faithfulness is needed in our relationship with God and our relationships with each other.

One last passage as I transition to the next two verses in our text. If you'd go to Psalm 37 real quick, Psalm 37. As you're turning there let me quote one that's quoted often in Proverbs 16:9. "The heart of a man plans his way," do you know the rest of this verse? "But the Lord establishes his steps." God is going to direct you, but you're going to plan your way. Psalm 37 is going to tell you how. And it's going to put it in the context of us looking at other people and we think, well, they get to plan according to the flesh, which is they can make a plan and if something better comes along they just do the better thing. But that's not how we're supposed to live. We're supposed to live differently and our plans are described for us in this great text. Look at the beginning of this psalm, Psalm 37 verse 1. "Fret not yourself because of evildoers," verse 1 says. Why in the world would I fret about evildoers? Well, because they're doing wrong things and it's affecting me negatively and I'm really upset about what I'm reading, what I'm hearing, what I'm seeing. And "don't be envious of wrongdoers." Are you ever envious of wrongdoers? Well, I bet everyone in the room, if you're honest, you're envious of people who don't have the moral strictures that you have. You're committed to the Lord. You got to serve the Lord, you got to do things that God tells you to do. I'd have more expendable income if I never gave a dime to the church. That'd be true. I'd have a lot more time if I didn't have to go the extra mile, stay the extra hour, spend the extra dollar, just as we said last week, if my intentions weren't godly, I'd have a lot of stuff to spend on myself.

There are plenty of reasons I can envy the guy across the street who can get his golf clubs, throw them in the back of his trunk and head off on a Sunday morning. I can understand that. And I can frustrate myself over the fact that non-Christians are out there doing all kinds of things, whatever they want. They steal, they cheat, they rob, they do whatever they want to do. But verse 2 says, "They'll soon fade like the grass." Remember that. That's not a winning strategy. They're going to "wither like the green herb." They may look really green right now, but it's going to rot. And it will be kindling for the fire to quote John the Baptist. What should I do, verse 3? "Trust in the Lord," trust in Yahweh, "and do good; dwell in the land," just sit there, keep doing what you're doing, and here's the best line, "and befriend faithfulness." That's all I'm trying to teach you this morning. Right now, at least in the first part of this sermon, I want to be best friends with faithfulness! "Delight yourself in the Lord," make it all about him, "and he'll give you the desires of your heart." Well, that's the problem. He's not doing it. It sure is taking him a long time. Look at those guys. They get to do whatever they want. They get to have immediate gratification, and you're delaying all this gratification of my life. Well, that's how it works. But you keep planning to do good.



Now, here's the keyword. Look at this Hebrew word here in verse 5 if you have your software up. Click on this. "Commit your way to the Lord." You got your laptops, your tablets. Click on it. Commit. What is that? That's the Hebrew word. It's the verb "to roll," roll it. Roll your way to the Lord. What is that? This is metaphorical. It's an analogous kind of way to look at it, an illustrative way to describe my plans. Paul's going to make a plan to go to Corinth twice on his way and on his way back from Macedonia before he goes back to Israel. And he took his plans, and we know this because this is what godly people do, and they roll them over to the Lord. I'm going to make a plan, it's going to be thoughtful, it's going to be prayerful, it's going to be with a clear conscience, it's going to be purely motivated, and it's going to be in faithfulness. I'm going to commit to doing this. And he rolls that plan over to the Lord. "Trust in him, and he will act." Now there comes the rub, setting us up for the second point. The next two verses in our passage. It's the Lord who will act, Psalm 127. You've quoted it many times. You've heard it quoted. "Unless the Lord builds the house..." You can swing the hammer all day long and you can have your ripsaw out but you know what? The house isn't going to be built. If God doesn't want it built, it's not going to be built. You can work all day on it and it's not going to be built. "Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchman," the alarm system, the guns that are trained at the horizon, if there's anybody that encroaches upon our property, you're going to "stay up in vain." Because if God wants the city to be breached there's going to be a breach and there will be a conquest.

I can plan, I can think it's a good plan, but God, independent of my planning, may have a different agenda. And that's what's going on here. So, you've got to take your plan and roll it over to the Lord. And guess what? In time, "He'll bring forth your righteousness as the light." Now, here's the problem with the psalmist. Right now, he's thinking, I want what's good. David is writing this. He says, I'd like this but it's not happening. No, "He will bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your justice as the noonday." You're going to be satisfied at noon. Well, he's up at three in the morning waiting for noon. It's a long time till dawn, let alone noon. It's not happening, it's not happening fast enough. Well, what am I supposed to do? Verse 7, "Be still," chill out, relax, "be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him; fret not yourself over the one who prospers in his way." Do you see that this is a nice little inclusion from verse 1 to verse 7, right? Don't fret about them. They're prospering in their way, I get it, "over the man who carries out his evil desires," but he's not living for the Lord. You make your plans. And your plans might get frustrated because there's someone bigger than you and a bigger plan that's more important than your plan and you just need to trust that. Your job is to faithfully plan but take those faithful plans and roll them over to the Lord.

Now back to our text, keep that in mind. Let's look at the next two verses. This may help. Paul has plans to go to Corinth twice. But what he talked to them about is God's plan, a bigger plan. Look at verse 19 now. "For the Son of God, Jesus Christ," right? Jesus, the Savior, that's what Yeshua means, Joshua, Christ, the anointed one, the prophet, priest, and king, that one "whom we proclaimed to you, the Son God," the one who is divine. We told you all about him. We preached to you. Silas and Tim and I," we all were like, yes, this is yes, it's "not Yes and No. We said this is true. "In him it is always Yes." He's always going to tell you yes, and it will always be accomplished because God is always going to speak what is true. "For all the promises of God," if he promises, they "find their Yes in him." And the one in particular



in mind here is his salvific promise, he's going to save you. "That is why, through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory." Now, there's the confusing line. Follow me now. Think with me here. I think that really is the line we're going to get to that has a double application. This is an argument, let me propose, and a lot of people look at this section and some are confused by it. Some of them just look at the theology of the gospel promises. But this really has a contextual purpose. Rhetorically, the contextual purpose is an argument from greater to lesser. Paul says, I made plans to come to you twice. It didn't happen. But I made faithful plans just as we should all work to imitate God's faithfulness. As God is faithful we need to be faithful in our planning.

But we need to remember this, right? That just like when I talked to you about God, I went from my planner to God's book, the Bible. And I talked about his planning, and guess what, his plan is never thwarted. His purpose always prevails. There is nothing that can thwart his plan. And if he says he's going to send Christ, he's going to send Christ. If he says, "If you confess your sins, he is faithful and just to forgive." He's always going to carry out his faithfully planned plans, and they're always going to be executed. Always. He is faithful. My message to you is faithful. Now some commentators say all he's doing here is trying to defend the fact that though he didn't fulfill what they expected, he's just trying to say, well, don't discount my message because it's true. Well, that's true and I get that, but the rhetorical purpose for this is that last line, I believe. Let me just suggest what I would argue for here. "That is why through him we utter our Amen to God for his glory." Now that's an interesting phrase that Paul didn't use elsewhere. It's an interesting way to put this.

What does Amen mean, by the way, Sunday school grads? Right? You think "so be it," right? Now, no one talks like that. You're not Shakespeare, right? So what does it mean, "so be it"? In the Bible it's translated sometimes as Jesus said Amen, Amen, which is just a transliteration of the Greek word, "Amēn." It's such an old word, Amen, right? It's translated "truly, truly" even that's weird. Right? Who talks like that? Amen, as I taught my kids when they were young, at the end of a prayer, sometimes we say Amen. At the end of a lot of things we say Amen, because it simply means "yeah, yeah, right on, that's right." It's an affirmation. We say Amen like this is right, this is true. And so here he's saying God makes plans, they're always fulfilled, God's plans are always fulfilled, as opposed to mine, I made plans, I meant them. They were well-intentioned, and I was faithfully planning to do it. But God's plans are always achieved. Therefore, when I look at what God does, I can always say, Amen to God for his glory. God gets glorified, gets applauded. God gets affirmed. And I say, Amen, God, that's right. That is what I think Paul is doing here. He's dealing with the immutability of God, the faithfulness of God. Immutability is a great word. You know the word mutation, that's the second half of this word from Latin. It means to change. "Im" means "no," not, it's not changed. God is immutable. He does not mutate, he does not change, there's no variation or shifting shadow with God, to quote James Chapter 1.

The God who is immutable, let's put it this way, is always a God of truth and truth is immutable. Think about that. Truth is immutably true, as Francis Schaefer liked to say, it's true truth. When God says something, it is always going to happen. It is always true. It's not only an indicative statement of what it is, but what will be. If he says this, well, he's the God "who



was, who is, and is to come." Have you been following this? He is a God who always states the truth. And here's the thing we learn elsewhere about this good God. His plans are immutably good. And Paul is going to argue in the next passage, starting in verse 23 into Chapter 2, it was good that I didn't come. And he's going to stand back and say, Amen to God. So our plans are changed. You got a pile of life on the workbench of what you're dealing with right now. A pile of stuff on the Workbench of Life. And all I'm saying is I don't want you to ask why, I just want you to say, how do I go about it? And then to say Amen to this mess, because it's a mess to you, but it's not a mess to God. I know it's quoted flippantly but let me quote it now. And it's very important that we get this. Romans 8:28, right? "God works all things together for good to those who love God and are called according to," here's a very important possessive pronoun, "HIS purpose." It's not your purpose. I know my purpose. I pray my purpose all the time. God, God, God, God. Please, please, please. And for Paul, he prayed. I'm sure he thoughtfully prayed. I'm going to go to Corinth on the way to Macedonia and on the way back, before I go to Israel, to Judea. I'm going to do that. That's what he prayed.

But I know this about Paul from Psalm 37, he clearly understood what it was to make plans as a human being. Proverbs 16:9, he always rolls his plans over to God. Another way to say that is the New Testament way that James taught us to pray, but we already learned it from the gospels in Matthew 26, when Jesus is in the garden and he says, here, I'm about to get strung up naked on a cross with my mom sitting there and the disciples sitting there and my enemies sitting there. I'm going to be nailed to a cross on a Roman execution rack, completely nude. I'm going to hang there in shame after being beaten. I don't want to do this. Let this cup pass for me, cup. The dregs of God's wrath, as it's put in the Old Testament. I don't want to drink the painful penalty of sin. But not my wants, "not my will," not my wants, "but yours, be done." And God's will is going to be done. He's planned this out. And so on the cross at the end he cries Tetelestai and he says, "I commend my spirit into your hands." Think about that. He adjoins his Amen to God's plan when in the garden he rolled his wants over to God. You and I have a lot of things we'd like, and it doesn't happen the way we'd like. I planned to be faithful, I tried to be faithful, and I lost my job, or my marriage fell apart, or my kids don't talk to me anymore, or whatever it is. I tried to be healthy, I ate right, but now I got cancer. Whatever your mess, the pile of mess on your Workbench of Life. I just don't want you to ask WHY anymore. I want you to say, God, HOW do I deal with it? And when you see this, know this with faith, God's got a plan. It will always be accomplished. It's a good plan. And his plan is immutably good. And I want to be able to say my Amen to God.

Now, does Paul say Amen to the theological promises of God in soteriology? Of course he does. But he also says Amen to God's plan, just like I hope you do. My plan was not to be your pastor. I did not plan this. I didn't want to do it. I've told you the story countless times. I didn't want to be a pastor. I didn't like talking. I didn't like talking in class. I'd sit in the back. I wouldn't go if I didn't have to. Sometimes when I had to I didn't go. I didn't like it. I didn't want to speak, right? And God changed my plan. I had a plan and I prayed a plan. I wanted a plan and it didn't happen. So here I am. I hated speaking in public, and now I do it incessantly. (audience laughing) Not my plan, but here's what I want to say to God at the end of the day. I'll utter my Amen to God, right? It's what God planned. So I'll say, okay. I had a plan and I



liked my plan and it would have made me more money. It would have been more fun and I would have had a lot more free time and whatever. But I have to now utter my Amen to God to his glory.

Here's what it's about. We talked about sincere planning, both in motive last time and in faithfulness this week. Now I'm saying you need to also have a sincere deference. Okay, I'll put it this way. Number two, "Recall God's Immutability When You Plan." God is immutable. He's immutably good. He's benevolent. He's got a benevolent plan. He works all things together for good. It did not feel good when Job buried his 10 children, his seven sons and three daughters. That didn't feel good. He didn't like it. He protests from Chapter 4 to Chapter 37 he protests. He wants God to tell him why. And in the end, he finds out that's the wrong question and he covers his mouth, and he says who am I to answer back to God? And here's the point. God had a plan and his plan was overarching. And James even highlights the plan. And that is look at the example of Job. Look at the outworking of God's plan in Job's life. And Job becomes this paragon of encouragement to generations. And I mean a lot of generations, over 4,000 years, I assume, based on the time frame of that particular story. And all of that was God's plan. So you got a lot of junk on the table. You think, I wish this went together. And you're sitting there looking at your life going, I don't have the instructions. Welcome to the club. We don't know how this is all going to fit together. And even if you think in your mind, well, creatively, I know when I see God, I'm going to figure it all out. I don't even know that. I can't promise you that. Maybe there's a little hope that God is going to show us how this all worked together for good, but you better trust that it will. And who knows? We certainly won't know. Sometimes we don't even know in this life. Why? And I don't think Job died knowing exactly why he went through everything he went through. But from heaven's perspective, even if we don't, I just want us to trust in the fact that God worked out his good purpose.

Remember God's immutability. He's immutably good. Truth is immutably true. Our will always has to yield to his plans. That's what James 4 is all about. I'm not going to say I'm going to go to this city, I'm going to conduct business, I'm to make a profit, I'm going to return. You ought to say, "If the Lord wills and I will live and do this or that." If you don't have that in your mind, it says, "All such boasting is evil." Boasting? I don't feel like I'm boasting when I make plans. Paul's not boasting either. But what he is saying is I know in my mind, if not in my mouth, "if the Lord wills." And he did use that phrase, by the way, with the Corinthians, if the Lord wills, I will come to you. We have to have that in our thinking because God's will we have to be sincerely deferential toward and saying Amen to God's plan as it's working itself out is exactly where we should be. My goal is not to take steps backwards in my sanctification as I deal with the pile of stuff on the Workbench of my Life.

And just think of that verse. We always look at it like, look at the difference, right? Proverbs 16:9, "The heart of a man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps." Well, those are two different things, I get it. But how good it is to know the Lord establishes his steps. That's where we need to live. Recall that, keep that in mind. And the good things, I don't know, let me just quote this last one before I leave this point. James 1 verses 16 and 17, "Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers," James 1 verses 16 and 17. "Every good gift and every perfect gift comes down from above." Now, you know that part. Every good gift comes from



God. I just want more of them. That's what Psalm 37 is all about. I'd like more. Can I have that constantly? "Coming down from the Father of lights," now, here's the key, "with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change." God is immutable. Well, if God's immutable and he gave me ice cream for dessert last night, why can't I have ice cream for breakfast? That's what most of us are immaturely asking. You know, the last thing that happened when I had a project in the garage, man, I conquered it in half the time I thought it would take. This is a very small thing. But now I'm going to spend two weeks looking for instructions and spending five hours putting this together with leftover parts. Oh my goodness. I don't want that. It's part of God's plan. And in that plan I need to trust that God is immutably good so that I can say my Amen to God, which is hard for us to do when it's not what we want and we're so tempted to ask why.

With time fleeting, let's go to verse 21, back to our passage. It's printed on your worksheet. Look at verse 21, it seems even more afield, as I said. Here we go further into what seems like abstract theological truth. But I think there's a key to this. It's going to help us interpret this based on the context. "And it is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us and who has put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee." Now, sometimes when you syntactically outline or block outline a text, you can find Paul's argument kind of cascading from one to the next. You can see that in Ephesians. You know, just, Paul's got a topic and it goes from one then it goes on. And we kind of have this cascading move down into other. But that's not what's happening here. Look at verse 23. He's right back to the clear conscience discussion and the reason for his changed plans that he started in verse 12. "I call God to witness against me." Here's why I didn't show up. So I know whatever's said here in verses 21 and 22, just like verses 17 and 18, has to be about him trying to say, don't believe my critics. I'm not just doing this and making plans that I don't plan on carrying out. I know I did, but there's a reason for it. And you know, just like I told you a message that is true, I just know God is working out his plan. I'm deferential toward that. And I'll say my Amen to God for all that he accomplishes. And he accomplishes more than just theological truth. He accomplishes the details of our lives. But now he says, it is God who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us. Well, that sounds out there. Let's dig into the word anointed.

Well, what we can do, we're tempted to do and it's not a bad thing to do. And the seal and the Spirit, that's great. But what's the point? Let me have you underline this. This is the emphasis I believe and how it relates to the context. Verse 21, "It is God who establishes," here's the phrase, "us with you in Christ," us with you. What's the problem with the critics? The critics are a big crowbar trying to take the people of Corinth and pry them away from a good relationship with the Apostle Paul. That's what's trying to happen. And he's trying to say, no, no slow down, slow down. Well, you need to know you're mad at me because I didn't come and the critics are saying I didn't come because I didn't care or whatever the reason is. They're besmirching my reputation. But can we just get back to the big issues? The big issues that really he leaned into in the first letter that we have from Paul to the Corinthians. All the factionalism. Don't let this rift be created because I didn't come when I planned to come. I mean, God's working out a plan. I don't want any of this to mess that up. I need you to know that you and I are on the same team. God has established you and me in Christ. We are together. Look at your jersey. We're on the team, guys. Isn't that what he says at the



beginning of First Corinthians? I'm of Paul. I'm a Paulist. I'm of Peter. Stop. This is about Christ. And he says I have been established with you. We, me and Silas and Timothy, we've been all put into this relationship with God in Christ, and so have you, we're on the same team. This is an appeal, I believe, rhetorically, to the unity of these people. And he's trying to say, do not let this get between us.

Number three, let's put it this way. I know this is an open-ended way to word this third point, but I'll explain why. Number three. Let your secure future, which is where this goes. You're in Christ, sealed in Christ. It's a guarantee of your future that you have the Spirit. "Let Your Secure Future Get You Through." That's open-ended. Get you through, get you through what? More on that in a second. But the focus is you are set, established. That's a strong verb, "established in Christ." He has, now here's a weird word, "anointed you." Now it's only weird because we don't usually translate it that way because it's usually not as some kind of description of what happened. It's usually describing a person and it's in the same sentence. And we don't see it, it's a play on words, because we're so used to the word "Christ," we forget what it means, but remember now what it means. What does the word "Christos" mean? Well, it comes from the verb "Crino." Crino means to anoint. And Christ is the Christos, and the Christos means he's the anointed one. Did you read the Daily Bible Reading yesterday? We were in Numbers, right? He finished the tabernacle, all the instructions were carried out, and they were trying to cut things the right height, and the ropes had to be the right way, and the pegs had to be the right way, and all the utensils and all of the furniture of the tabernacle, and it had to be mobile and it was all finished. And it says in our reading yesterday that Moses anointed the tabernacle and consecrated it for service. What does that mean?

Well, we already heard about the anointing oil it was like the special kind of cologne or perfume, make it special, that smelled a particular fragrant way, it was only used for that, and it was used to set things apart. Well, set things apart, but also set people apart. The priests and the prophets and later the kings were all set apart by the anointing oil. Now Christ is the Anointed One. He's called in this passage the Christ. He has "established you with us in Christ," the Anointed One, "and he has anointed us." To be set apart. That building used to be a construction zone, right? It was a tent. But now it's going to be set apart for one thing, worship. God's going to inhabit there. We have been established in Christ and been set apart in the set apart one. We are all, Paul loves this phrase, in Christ. We're all IN this relationship with God in Christ. He has made us to be set apart. He has anointed us, put us in this separate position. Now here's the deal, we are such a minority in the world. You're sitting here, I hope, under the lordship of Christ, listening to the preaching of God's word, fellowshiping together as a group of people who all say we want to please God, there's no other gods but God, and his Son is our Lord, and the Spirit of God is indwelling us, and we want to serve the triune God. The rest of the world doesn't care about all that. We're here as a separate group of people and all the little pockets of congregations around the country and around the world, they have the same commitment, but it's a small group. It's called the "little flock," as Jesus used to call it.



That particular group, we're on the same team. It's not like these are two NFL teams, right? This is a very small group of people, a small flock that follows one shepherd. And I just want you to think about that. Paul is saying, we've been established, we've even plucked out from the world and put into this thing. We're anointed, we're set apart by God's redemptive work in the redeemer, Christ, the Anointed One. And he's put his seal on us. What is a seal? If a Roman official is going to send a communicate on some parchment, he's going to wrap it up, put a seal on it with wax. This is an official statement of official communication. In this case, here is that papyrus that is now set apart as this picture of something that communicates something from some big source of authority. God has put his seal on us. He has put his name, so to speak, on us. He's given us this position of authority and this position of mercy and grace by redeeming us. All of this piles on top of each other, but it's all about security. He's giving us his Spirit in our hearts, and here's a great word, as a down payment, as a guarantee. It's going to happen. God is going to see us through.

I want us to see that as Christians, when there are problems between us, and sometimes because situations make it to where our lives are a little more messy than we thought they were going to be, a little bit more chaotic, a little more unorganized, unpredictable than we thought they were going to be. Sometimes the misunderstandings like Paul is dealing with here can separate us and put a wedge between us. We need to get through the rifts, we need to get through the division, and behind all that was the criticism. He's going to lay into that later in this book, but the critics, you need to get through the critics in your life. You need to get through your job losses in your life, or let's go back to the beginning of Second Corinthians 1 in our minds. Paul said we were "despairing even of life." "But this was to make us trust in God and not ourselves who raises the dead." What's the point? Our unity and our security that we're all together guaranteed glorification that we're going to be a part of God's redemptive group of people, the citizens of the kingdom, that is something that unifies us, it's security in our lives, and it ought to get us through whatever comes our way. And the Corinthians should be unified in this.

Let me end with this. Go to Romans Chapter 8 with me, if you would. If I think about that kind of security, I can't help but think of verse 30 of Romans Chapter 8. Romans 8:30. "Those whom he's predestined he's also called, and those whom he's called he also justified, and those whom he justified he's also glorified." Okay, that's security. Because where are you on that line? Well, I'm justified. I hope you sit here justified. And if not, you need to be today. You need to put your trust in Jesus Christ. Admit that you're a sinner. You deserve hell. Admit the fact that you deserve hell but God sent his Son to incur hell for you and you need to trust him fully. He needs to become your king, your savior, and your Lord. And then you're justified at that moment. And if you're justified, it's as good as done. You're glorified. That security gets us through whatever comes our way.

Verse 31, what are we going to say to that? What do we say to being secured people, set apart, anointed by God, put in a relationship, his seal is on us, his Spirit is in us as a down payment of what's coming. Well, "If God's for us, who can be against us?" Well, I got a lot of people. The Romans had a lot of people. They had Roman officials and Roman soldiers and people persecuting them. Christians were about to go into underground like a bunch of



gophers in the catacombs of Rome. A lot of people are against them, but really who can be against you? "He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?" And if you are a word-faith guy or a prosperity preacher quoting that, you better read the whole context. The context is about a persecuted church in Rome. And yet the point is, yeah, but you're secure in Christ. Yeah, but you're all a part of the little flock that God has laid down his Son's life for. And because of that you're secured. And if God is for you, I don't care who's against you. And if he gave up his Son, just be patient. Psalm 37, don't fret, hang in there, wait patiently for him. "Who's going to bring a charge against God's elect?" Well, that would be dumb. "It's God who justifies." Are you going to fight with God? "Who's going to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died." He was condemned for us. "More than that, he was raised and he's at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us?" Who's he interceding for? Every one of his children. Think about that. Do you think that'll solve our division and our rifts? It should. Is it going to solve the problems of criticism? Yes. Is it going to solve the problem of you losing your job? Sure. Is it going to solve the problem of persecution breaking out in the United States? Fine. Is it going to solve the problem of my own personal suffering? Of course, because in the end I'm going to be glorified.

"Who's going to condemn?" Well, God's interceding for me, the Godman, Jesus Christ. "Who's going to separate us from the love of Christ? Verse 35, 'shall tribulation?' No, 'Distress?' Nope. Persecution?" No. "Famine?" No. "Nakedness?" No, "Danger, sword?" This is why you can't preach the whole context as a prosperity preacher. All these things, they're going to happen. You're not exempt from those. "As it is written, 'For your sake we're being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.'" Christian life's going to be hard. "But in all these things." verse 37, "we're more than conquerors through him who loved us." How secure is that? Guaranteed, put a seal on us, anointed us. "I'm sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation." What does that spell? I don't care what's piled up on the Workbench of your Life right now. I don't care. "Nothing will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord." That should get you through whatever comes. It should keep us unified, it should keep us getting us past all of our hurt feelings, all the problems, all the criticism and all the suffering.

I did the project on Monday, and the only way I got through the madness of my Monday with my pile of life on the workbench, my literal workbench, was knowing that someone designed that stupid end table. (audience laughing) And though I didn't have the instructions and I desperately wanted the instructions, I just knew it all fit together somehow. Providentially, the instructions were hidden from me, but I knew they existed. And you need to remember that when the pile on your workbench is a mess. I knew one way or another the pieces had to fit together. And in the end, if you're wondering, they did. The remote control, the cup of ice, my little snacks, and the little charger that I basically had to assemble with a soldering iron. No, I didn't, but it felt like that. You thought I was going to say, get copper, braid copper, buy a plug. This is how this stupid thing was. I should have spent more money on this. (audience laughing) But by God's grace, I didn't take a step backwards in my sanctification. I would hope that when it comes to the real issues of life, I can fare as well. Life's not going to go the way



you plan it. I understand that. But stop asking why. Let's just stop asking why and start asking how. How do I tackle this with faithfulness, with a confidence in God's good overarching plan and through some comfort that we derive from being his eternal children?

Let's pray. God, help us in our world where all of us in this room know what it's like to have disappointing plans, things that we want, things that we pray for that don't pan out, health, relationships, money, opportunities, career. God, there's no midlife crisis for us as Christians. There's no despondency because of the pile that you sovereignly layout on our Workbench of Life. God, we need to trust you. We need to learn to not fret, to not envy, to delight ourselves in you and to befriend faithfulness. Let faithfulness be our best friend. We're going to do what we say and mean what we say. We're going to say what we mean and God by your grace we're going to accomplish whatever you allow us to accomplish. If you move us into a whole different arena or things go in a completely opposite way than we planned and we feel like we have lost face because we told people this or that and it didn't happen. That may not be because we're unfaithful. Let it be because your faithful and good, immutable plan is just being worked out in a way different than I thought. And that we can trust you. In the end we're all going to end up in the same kingdom as your children and for that, God, we want to rejoice. So give us a hearty and helpful, encouraging reminder this morning, just to keep serving you unwavering in our faith and persevering in our strength as you provide it for us.

In Jesus' name. Amen.