

A Life Plan

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2 Corinthians 4:7-18

But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. 8 We are hard pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; 9 persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed— 10 always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. 11 For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. 12 So then death is working in us, but life in you. 13 And since we have the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, "I believed and therefore I spoke," we also believe and therefore speak, 14 knowing that He who raised up the Lord Jesus will also raise us up with Jesus, and will present us with you. 15 For all things are for your sakes, that grace, having spread through the many, may cause thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God. 16 Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. 17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, 18 while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

Thursday I had my 6-month dental hygienist appointment and I was reminded of the frailty of life. My dentist the week prior had passed out, struck his head, which produced profuse bleeding, and broke some ribs. The reason for his black out was a heart problem that he did not know he had. He suffers from a heart arrhythmia, a fluttering of the heart that causes an irregular heart beat. They put a pace maker in to regulate his heart beat and besides his sore ribs he is doing well. My dentist is 60. I mention his age because the younger among us think little about health, except when they have a cold or suffering the flu. "Well, yeah, he's 60 years old, what do you expect when you get that age?" Thus, you may be tempted to think my sermon has little to do with you. Well, you must know that I'm not done talking about my Thursday's dental visit.

After the dentist left the room, the hygienist and I began talking about the dentist's health challenges. This was the first time she had cleaned my teeth because she works on Fridays but had come in to fill in for another hygienist. She then proceeded to tell me that she too has a heart condition, her problem is not arrhythmia but that her heart beats too fast. I immediately thought she was teasing because she looked to be in excellent condition. She explained that she needs a major surgery that will fix her problem. She has a resting heartbeat that is super fast. It's a condition called tachycardia. For example, a normal resting heartbeat is around 60 beats per minute, no more than one hundred if you're healthy. But hers is a great deal over a hundred beats a min-

ute. She told me she too nearly passed out at work sitting in a chair. They took her pulse and it
190. She is constantly fatigued because the heart is overworked. On top of that she had shoulder
problems that recently required surgery. She is 26 and looked the picture of health.

The point of telling you this is that all that is material, including these bodies are perishing. The
material world is broken and headed for demise and will give way to a new creation. This is a fact.
And it is also our hope.

Do we not joyfully sing of God's coming new world? And do we not also longingly sing of a new
body free from sin, disease, and death?

On the resurrection morning
When all the dead in Christ shall rise
I'll have a new body
Praise the Lord, I'll have a new life

Sewed in weakness, raised in power
Ready to live in Paradise
I'll have a new body
Praise the Lord, I'll have a new life

But it is the here and now that mostly concerns us. How sad. And even sadder we don't have a
life plan to keep us on course. Most of us just exist. Life is a challenge. Put the preverbal period
there. Life is tough and if you do not have a life plan, when problems occur you will be behind.
You need it before the challenges and adversities of life. Here in our text is the life plan of the
Apostle Paul. His ministry plan and life plan is here for us to see. I suggest that we examine his
life plan and strategy so that when you experience the decay of the material world, which is pres-
ently occurring, you'll know how to face it, even your own mortality. Because whether you're 60
or 26, or 90 or 9, you're dying.

I know we don't like to come to church to be reminded of that, that's what we try to forget. We
try to forget we're dying. We do everything we can to cause the physical, what we see, to main-
tain its youthfulness. The billions of dollars if not more that are spent, trying to keep this looking
good, it's amazing. And in some of our cases, it was never good so there's no use trying. But we go
to great lengths and spend great amounts trying to preserve something that will not last. That's
the majority of our focus. Something is wrong. Then when some difficulty comes, when some
strange fire erupts in our lives, we don't know how to endure it, and not just endure but actually
take advantage of our sufferings and problems because, if you have a life plan like the Apostle Paul,
you will not waste your suffering. You will take advantage of it and God's glory and your spiritual
development will occur.

I. Paul's Ministry Statement

“But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.” (2 Corinthians 4:7)

Here’s my purpose, says the Apostle Paul, I’m just an earthen vessel, I’m just a clay pot. But I have within this clay vessel the greatest treasure and wealth that exceeds all of the value of the universe. The Gospel glory has been deposited within me and that is God’s unique purpose. It’s a strange thing, isn’t it? That God would take such value and treasure and place it in something so invaluable.

How many of you have saved, maneuvered, and manipulated until you could finally purchase that very rare and expensive gift to give to the person you loved? I doubt you put it in a brown paper bag. I just rather doubt it. You want the package to be befitting of the gift. But God does the exact opposite. He takes something that is of tremendous and inestimable value and He puts it in an old clay jar. I don’t want you to think clay jar as in your body, but it’s this mortal physical existence on this earth. That is what Paul says is God’s plan and that’s how we are going to work for His greater good and glory. God is going to be glorified that He can invest treasure in something so worthless. It shows Him to be as gracious and good as He really is.

For example, look at the Apostle Paul. We don’t know exactly what he looked like but we do have writings that came from the time of Paul, one in particular, that described his physical stature. Here’s what we think he looked like—a man small in size. My wife will take delight. She likes to tell everybody she is 5-foot one and a *half*. She emphasizes the half. Well, Paul didn’t even make 5-feet. He was about 4-foot-11, they think. Some say he was even shorter, maybe 4-foot-7; three cubits. If you add up what three cubits is using 18-inches, he was barely over 4-feet.

So he was short and bald-headed. Perhaps baldness was his thorn in the flesh. He was bow-legged, with eyebrows meeting, and rather long-nosed. That was the physical appearance of the Apostle Paul. So when he says God took a treasure and put it in an old clay pot, he literally meant an old clay pot, not even decorated or painted on the outside, just plain.

He even talks of his own personal appearance in 2 Corinthians 10:10. He quotes the Corinthians and says,

“For his letters,” they say, “are weighty and powerful, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible.”

He was a weak man but he incorporates his weakness into his life statement and says, “I’m going to take advantage of my weakness. I’m going to take advantage of my ugliness and smallness because the smaller I am the bigger God looks.” That’s his purpose, his statement for ministry. “The smaller I can look the better God looks.”

Then when it came to his preaching, I’m really thankful he says his speech was *contemptible*. He wasn’t a great orator. He wasn’t like Apollos, who could move you by the great power of his words and cadence, no.

He said of himself in 2 Corinthians 11:6,

“Even though I am untrained in speech, yet I am not in knowledge. But we have been thoroughly manifested among you in all things.”

He was not a great preacher. You were not moved by Paul’s eloquence, but something moved you. It wasn’t what you saw or even what you heard, it was the power of God. It was the treasure on the inside of that old broken clay pot. It was not of this world, but there was something heavenly about this man so that even though his words were plain, not adorned, there was a power from them that literally grabbed you.

Then there was Paul’s very poor health. He said in Galatians 4:13,

“You know that because of physical infirmity I preached the gospel to you at the first.”

In other words, he was very ill when he came to them. He often carried some ailment in his body. He tells the Galatians he had very poor eyesight and he said, “you love me so much you would be willing to give me your own eyes.”

Then on top of his ugly, small appearance and his contemptible and not necessarily interesting speech and with all of his health issues, God gave him a thorn in the flesh. He writes of it in 2 Corinthians 12:7,

“And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure.”

Tons of ink has been wasted trying to guess what the thorn in the flesh was. I can only take Paul at his word that it was something in the body, probably some kind of illness. Three times—not just once or twice—but three times, with powerful praying he pled for God to take whatever this thorn is. And you know what God said to him? “No. It’s part of your life statement, remember, Paul? You’re a clay pot. Not only that, but I’m going to put a little pressure on the clay pot until it cracks a little, until a fracture and fissure appears. Why? Because when you are weak, I am strong.”

“And He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.” (2 Corinthians 12:9)

There it is. The life statement of the Apostle Paul. “In my weakness, God is seen to be strong.” Because who could believe that a little short Jew with poor eyes, contemptible speech, and a unibrow, could literally turn the world upside down? It has to be God!

And you have your clay pots, your physical existence on this earth, as marred and flawed as the Apostle’s. They may be a little more attractive, maybe a little more talented in some ways, but

it's still flawed and marred and that's God's design for you—to take that which is weak and contemptible and show forth His glory and goodness.

II. Paul's Ministry Story

His life statement is to live out of his weakness so God's strength is manifested and this is what happens to the clay pot:

“We are hard pressed on every side,

God puts on the pressure. What happens when you begin to press on the pot? A little fissure, a little crack, a surface fracture appears.

yet not crushed;

God never breaks it. He presses and causes fissures to appear, yes, but He never breaks it.

we are perplexed,

Do you ever scratch your head and ask what this is all about? That's what it means to be perplexed. Paul literally said, “I don't know about certain things. I don't always understand what God is doing or why He's doing it. I may be a great theologian and Peter may say that my writings are hard to understand and everybody thinks I've got this great intellect and I have been blessed by God with great knowledge, but I'm telling you that even in all of my great knowledge of God and His ways, there are many things that perplex me and cause me to say, ‘I don't have a clue.’”

but not in despair;

I may not understand, but I'm never in despair.

persecuted, but not forsaken;

Even amid persecution, Paul is not tempted to believe God has forsaken him.

struck down, but not destroyed—” (2 Corinthians 4:8-10)

Paul says, “I get knocked down,” and I don't think he's talking just physically but metaphorically. This is a word picture. Life often gives me blows and I often fall to the ground but I don't stay down.

There's Paul's life story. It's amazing how he spins this to the positive. Some of us, well, we spin things to the negative. We're virtual, perpetual pessimists. Gloomy Gusses. Some of you, I'm just going to be honest, are Gloomy Gusses. I don't know how you live. I don't know how you make it. I mean, to see the negative in everything? You don't see that in the Apostle Paul. It's not, “Gloom

and despair and agony on me; deep dark depression, excessive misery. If it wasn't for bad luck I'd have no luck at all." You don't see that, you see hope in God. He was an optimist. Not because of his temperament or nature but because he knew there was a treasure inside of him.

You know what a pessimist and optimist are, don't you? An optimist sees the best in the world, while a pessimist sees only the worst. An optimist finds the positive in the negative, and a pessimist can only find the negative in the positive. For example, an avid duck hunter was in the market for a new bird dog. His search ended when he found a dog that could actually walk on water to retrieve a duck. Shocked by his find, he was sure none of his friends would ever believe him. He decided to try to break the news to a friend of his, a pessimist by nature, and invited him to hunt with him and his new dog. As they waited by the shore, a flock of ducks flew by. They fired, and a duck fell. The dog responded and jumped into the water. The dog, however, did not sink but instead walked across the water to retrieve the bird, never getting more than his paws wet. This continued all day long; each time a duck fell, the dog walked across the surface of the water to retrieve it. The pessimist watched carefully, saw everything, but did not say a single word. On the drive home the hunter asked his friend, "Did you notice anything unusual about my new dog?" "I sure did," responded the pessimist. "Your dog can't swim!"

If you need to borrow money, you need to find a pessimist to borrow from because they'll never expect it back. There are people like that, they just see the negative in everything. You know how all dark clouds have a silver lining? To the pessimist, the beautiful white puffy clouds always have a dark lining. Is that the story of your life? Paul's story was completely different because he understood the Gospel.

"But in all things we commend ourselves as ministers of God: in much patience, in tribulations, in needs, in distresses, 5 in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in fastings; 6 by purity, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by sincere love, 7 by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, 8 by honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report; as deceivers, and yet true; 9 as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold we live; as chastened, and yet not killed; 10 as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things."
(2 Corinthians 6:4-10)

In all of that, Paul did not complain. This is not a complaint; this is a praise unto God. Why? Because it fit his life statement. The more challenges and problems he had, the greater opportunity he had to display the treasure inside of him.

III. Paul's Ministry Strategy

How did he do that? How did he not become a Gloomy Gus? How did he not become depressed?

A. The Gospel Displayed Bodily.

His strategy was to take the negative and turn it into a positive. So in his body he displayed the Gospel. Look at verse 11.

“always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. 11 For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus’ sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.” (2 Corinthians 4:11)

Paul is saying, “All of this suffering I’ve had to endure preaching the Gospel is nothing more than a physical illustration of the Gospel. When I suffer. When I spend those sleepless, hungry nights, traveling from one village to the other, it’s a demonstration of the Gospel.” The deprivation, the self-denial, and self-sacrifice, Paul saw as opportunities to preach. They preached themselves, because the problems stated the Gospel. When Paul submitted to the sufferings God called him to submit to he could display that the Son of God also submitted to the Father’s plan of suffering for our sake. Paul was showing in demonstration, not just proclamation, what Jesus had to do to save us. He had to deny Himself and suffer.

Paul is saying, “See my wracked body? See my scars? See the bruises, the malnourished body from spending months in a cold, damp prison? That’s the Gospel. Look at my marks and know that Jesus suffered far greater for you.” That was the first strategy.

B. Gospel Life Given to Others.

“So then death is working in us, but life in you.” (2 Corinthians 4:12)

The more I’m dying, physically and to self, the more the resurrected life of Jesus is displayed. How does a man keep going on? It is difficult to believe one man endured so much pain. Paul describes being beaten with rods three times by the Jews. Can you imagine a rod and being struck by strong men? He said he received lashes, was imprisoned, shipwrecked—we could go on and on. I don’t know how one little fellow, who was already sickly, could have endured so much. But Paul says, “Ah ha! But it’s the Gospel again. It’s not me, it’s the resurrected life of Jesus in me!” It’s the Gospel. It’s the treasure that’s in him.

Here is his ultimate strategy.

C. The More Converted, The More Glory for God.

“For all things are for your sakes, that grace, having spread through the many, may cause thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God.” (2 Corinthians 4:15)

The more you see in this earthen vessel the treasure and beauty of God and His Gospel, the more will be converted and the more converted the more thanksgiving and glory to God. There’s the Apostle’s objective. So Paul didn’t mind for a new crack to appear. He didn’t mind for a new fracture because every fracture and crack let the light of the glory of the Gospel in the face of

Jesus Christ to shine out because he knew somebody would be saved as a result of that. And the more saved, the more glory God gets.

As remarkable as all of that is, there is still a point of endurance. What kept Paul going? There has to be a limit to a man and certainly there was. Paul was not superhuman. He acknowledges there was a supernatural strength; you can't attribute the life of Paul to just sheer human endurance and resoluteness.

There have been many true Christians over the centuries that when the pressure was too much they broke. Read the life stories of some of God's greatest persecuted. I'm thinking of one now in China. He spent many years in a Chinese prison and he finally couldn't take it anymore and he renounced Jesus, just like Peter had done. But, just like Peter, God restored him. But even in this case, a man came to the limits of his physical capabilities and his psychological makeup and he broke.

What kept Paul from breaking, when he endured much worse? There was a motivation and a stimulus. It's verses 16-18. Let's finish with these three verses.

IV. Paul's Ministry Stimulus

"Therefore we do not lose heart."

Paul is saying, "I know I just said all that, but I want you to know I'm not discouraged, I'm not depressed, I'm not even thinking about throwing in the towel."

"Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day."

Paul is saying, "Yes, something in my physical being is happening, I am dying daily, inch by inch, hour by hour, day by day. I am dying on the outside, but something supernatural and spiritual is taking place in my inward spirit. My spirit is growing almost in proportion to my outward, physical decay and death."

Harken back to last week's message. This is why you need to be here for every service. I've learned over the years that God runs themes in my preaching. I didn't know what my text was until Friday afternoon so I'm not preaching some theme purposely; God is doing this. Someone told me last week, "I can't believe some of the sermons I'm hearing lately because it seems like from week to week you've described what God has just taught me or what I'm already living out the week before." So pay attention.

Last week, in 1 Peter 1:8, we showed how the adversity, the test of fire, and the trials of life should not bring you to the place of depression or discouragement but become the very means of experiencing the presence of God, literally sensing the presence of God. Peter said that ought to happen on a continual basis, rejoicing with joy unspeakable and full of glory. How is that pos-

sible? Because in your suffering you see what God is doing in you. There is a relationship, there is a dynamic intimacy between you and God, and you understand that God is not after you to hurt you, He's after you to deliver you of a material, physical focus.

That's our problem. A material, physical focus. That's our problem. We are creatures of the senses. What rules? What's more important to us? What we can see, that which we can hear, smell, taste, and touch. The material. Paul is saying, "God has brought me through, and by my suffering, to minimize the material and maximize the spiritual."

Watch this, verse 17,

"For our light affliction, which is but for a moment,"

He's not speaking from the vantage point of heaven. This is not Paul speaking from the grave in the presence and glory of God. He's not saying, "You know, I'm looking back on my life and seeing that all I had to suffer and I'm telling you that it was worth it and it's not even worthy to be compared to what I'm enjoying now." No, he's writing from the vantage point of his present sufferings and he's able to say, "All this I'm going through? It's light." Why? Because it's momentary. It's momentary. It's not going to last. It's temporal. It's short in duration. Why? Because life is long. In fact, it's immortal, it's unending.

See, the life that you now have, the physical one you've so preoccupied yourself with on this earth, is so infinitesimally small compared to the eternal existence you and I have. *Have.* We are eternal beings, having eternal life.

Paul is right to see it *now* that all of the problems we're going through are light and momentary because they're working for us.

"is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,"

Listen to this next verse.

"while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal." (2 Corinthians 4:16-18)

As I bring this message to a close, this is the most important part. Nothing of physical substance can ultimately satisfy because it is not eternal. It has a beginning and it has an end. It's not going to last. For everyone over the age of 30, do you still have the first automobile you had? I only specify because some of you are still driving your first automobile because of your youth it is the only car you've owned. Do you still have that first automobile? Where is it? It's either been recycled, melted down, and made into something else, or it's rusting out in a junk yard somewhere. It no longer brings you joy or satisfaction because it couldn't last.

That's a frail illustration of what Paul is trying to say. Nothing in the physical, material world can satisfy. It may for a while but it cannot sustain your joy. It cannot be your satisfaction. It's temporal. That's the nature of all things material, even your body. It has a beginning and it has an end. We were given physical bodies to relate to the physical environment and both are decaying.

We often mournfully muse and wonder why it was that God's plan for fallen man was to allow these bodies to deteriorate before death eventually takes us from here? I mean, God could have made you live in perfect, perpetual health and not even look like you've aged a day. Wouldn't that be a great testimony to the unsaved? I think sometimes God needs some help in His marketing. Man, I could come up with some great ideas for evangelism and that would be one of them. Perpetual youth. That's what everybody's looking for, isn't it? The fountain of youth.

Wouldn't that be an amazing sermon for the lost? Accept Christ and you'll not age a day and then when it's time for you to go home, you'll go in your sleep with no pain, only comfort, everything is great. Why does He allow His children to decay? Why the death process? Why disease, pain, suffering, and problems? The answer is, according to Paul in this text, to teach us the temporality of all things and to wean us away from the material.

God cursed the material because it was the material that Adam and Eve chose above the spiritual in the garden. It wasn't an apple or whatever the fruit was, it was the material. It was a choice between the material and the spiritual and Adam and Eve chose the material. But thank God, in His mercy and goodness, He cursed the material. Because the curse is not just a curse; amazingly the curse has a redemptive purpose. The curse shows us the futility of chasing the material. It is God's way of proving that the spiritual is the superior and only He can provide that.

Everything that is material is deteriorating. It will not last. That brand new iPad is not going to suit your fancy a year from now. And when that new phone is dinged or the screen gets cracked, how are you going to feel about it? I can't believe how many cracked phones are probably in this audience right now and you have to keep it until your contract runs out. You just long for that contract to run out so you can go get a new one with an uncracked face. This is a lesson! God cursed the material so we remember what we so often and so easily forget: you don't bank on the physical and material.

The more weakened the body the less reason to focus on it, but we do the opposite. The more our bodies weaken the more attention we pay them. The sicker our bodies the more we go to the doctor, the more we spend money and try to restore the body. There's nothing wrong with going to the doctor or taking medication, there's nothing wrong with trying to maintain your health. You ought to take care of the temple of the body. But that should not be your focus.

When God does take your health it should not rob your joy. But if your focus is on the material and that is the focus of your thoughts, then your joy will go with your health. But if the spiritual is the objective, to become strengthened spiritually in your relationship with Jesus day by day and that becomes the focus, then you're now qualified to take your weaknesses, death, and decay and use it as a Gospel presentation.

You can do the same thing Paul did. How many of you have physical limitations? You're not as whole as you used to be. Don't complain, reckon it as God's calling and charge to preach the Gospel through your pains. If we would just learn to think like this, you would be stimulated like Paul to live faithfully to the Lord.

Let me give you a few examples and then I'll be done.

How many of you really struggle with materialism? You like things. You often buy things not necessarily because you need them but because there's an inner soothing and your emotions feel better. Materialism doesn't always come with possessions.

I remember an older man who dressed in overalls. He was an automobile wholesaler, that means he would go to dealers and buy used cars and turn around and sell them to another dealer. He might only make a couple hundred dollars but he made a profit. He didn't even own a car. He would get on a bus and go from one town to another. He packed his lunch—a sandwich—and stuffed it in his bib overalls. He would eat on the bus, make his purchases and had them delivered to wherever he had sold them, and the man died a multimillionaire but no one would know it by looking at him. Again, materialism doesn't mean you have a lot of things. You may not. But materialism is to have your heart so persuaded by things that without them you can't truly be satisfied. That's materialism and the Bible warns that is covetousness and covetousness is idolatry.

What can cure you from your materialistic spirit? One thing. It's the Gospel. Here's the Gospel application to cure materialism: all things material are going to decay. They're not going to last, they're not going to keep their shiny new perspective or look or appearance. They're going to decay. They're not going to last. But there is something that does last, where moth and rust cannot destroy and thief cannot break in and steal. If you keep that Gospel perspective, the inner man is strengthened in the joy of the treasure of God. One happens because of the other.

Does anyone struggle with lust? Today pornography is a major issue; it's in the church. *It is in the church.* The latest things I'm hearing is that even now women are becoming prey. Up to 30 percent of the American female population is viewing pornography. It's a growing problem, male and female. There's an answer here of how to deal with that and put it to death. It's the Gospel. No willpower, device, or software will cure the heart. It's good to use them, they're good helps, but it will not cure the heart.

When you look at that image, you need to remember that's not real and secondly, it won't last. Ladies, help me here, isn't it true that the outer beauty of your youth will not last, no matter what you put on? Isn't that true? Haven't you seen the pictures of actors and actresses in their youth and then in their old age? They don't even look the same. That happens to us all. You can buy cream, \$100 a bottle, that's supposed to return youth and take out the wrinkles but it's temporal! It won't last. Eventually, time wins.

So here you are looking at an image, trying to satisfy something in the moment; let me tell you it won't satisfy past the moment. What you're looking at is not real and that person will not remain in that state. You're looking at something that's decaying. That is not eternal. That is not spiritual. The spiritual and eternal will satisfy because it never changes.

As I conclude, the more weakened the body, the more God is loosening you from this world so that you can freely preach the Gospel in your illness, in your sickness. If financial destitution comes, God is giving you an awesome opportunity to preach that my Jesus, though He was rich, yet he became poor for our sakes that we might become rich! Don't wail and moan over your financial state, use it for the glory of the Gospel—how? Because you see the unending and eternal—the wealth beyond this world!

If your hope is in relationships, I tell you they will come and they will go. How many of you have been keeping up with the Rory and Joey Feek situation? She was a 40-year-old woman with cervical cancer who passed away this week. It's been an amazing testimony. Even in youth, death comes. Life and relationships don't last. If your satisfaction is built upon that relationship, even husband and wife, my dear friend, when their last breath comes, you will lose all hope. It's only in the Gospel, it's only in that which is eternal, our hope is secure.

What a life plan to have. I pray you adopt it. Amen.