

Steve Pigott 2024

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Date: 27 October 2024

- [0 : 01] Well, I have been thoroughly enjoyed my time here this morning, Sunday school class, and the music this morning, wonderfully, wonderfully done. I do want to sing, however, one more song, and we'll do it a cappella.
- It's a great spiritual song that everybody knows, and yet it's important for my message this morning, and it's the song, Row, Row, Row Your Boat. Everybody ought to know that.
- Sing it with me. Row, row, row your boat gently down the stream. Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily, life is but a dream.
- Sing again. Row, row, row your boat gently down the stream. Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily, life is but a dream.
- It's a very, very important song for our purposes this morning. The passage that I'm turning to is going to be found, first of all, in the book of 2 Corinthians.
- [1 : 02] You might go ahead and turn there. And I use my telephone because I blow my letters up real big. You can probably see them from there. My dad saw what I was doing one day, and he said, wow, those are big letters.
- Even Ray Charles can read those. And so I'll be using my phone this morning for my messages. But I sing that song this morning because it will be important toward the end of the message.
- A number of years ago, a preacher that I was listening to recommended a book to read. And the book was titled Try Giving Yourself Away.
- And it was written by a man by the name of David Dunn. And he was the one who years ago coined the phrase random acts of kindness.
- Where you just do kind things for people whom you do not know. And in his book, he used a lot of illustrations. He was a salesman.
- [2 : 04] It was written back in the 40s. And he had this habit of walking down a strip mall looking at the display windows. And when he saw a display window that was uniquely done, he would walk into the store and ask for the manager.
- The manager would come, and he would pay his compliment to the manager. He said, I just wanted you to know I was walking by the store. I noticed the display window. It was so excellently done.
- I just wanted to step in and compliment you. The manager would often say, would you mind if I called the people who actually did the work and you pay that compliment to them?
- And so he'd wait. They would come. He would give them the compliment. Well, it really made their day because nobody does that. And often the manager would say, sir, you have really brightened our day.
- How about picking out a pair of shoes? It's on us today. Pick out a coat. It's on us today. And he said, you'd be amazed how many things I was given because I paid a compliment.
- [3 : 08] Now, you might be thinking, this is a good idea. I think I'm going to go to the mall tomorrow, compliment everybody on everything I see to see what I can be given.

But he said, you do not do this for what you can be given. But when you give yourself away, it is amazing how good things come to you in return.

Well, I know the truth of this. I was speaking in Titusville, Florida. I flew into Orlando one night, late at night, to get my Hertz rental car to drive to Titusville.

Now, the airport in Orlando, when you land, you're about two miles to get to the rental car place. I was on the Hertz van taking over.

And when I got there, there were no cars. There were a whole bunch of people on the van, but they had no cars. They were going to get cars there, but he said, it'll probably take us 30, 45 minutes to get cars there.

[4 : 12] Well, the people that were on that van, they were expecting cars to be there. And they were not happy. And there was ungodly language being used, demanding their car. And I heard the guy behind the counter, man alive, I sure could use a cup of coffee.

Well, I thought, I'm not doing anything. I can get back on the van, go back to the airport, get him a cup of coffee and come back. I guess probably I was gone 10 minutes. I came back.

I said, sir, I heard you say you could use a cup of coffee. I figured I could get you one. I got cream. I got sugar. I didn't know what you wanted. His mouth just fell open. He said, well, thank you. Appreciate that.

What's your name? Steve, Steve Pickett. Well, thank you, Steve. I appreciate that. I went and sat down, waiting for a car like all the other people. He said, Steve, how about following me?

We walked outside. He said, there is one car on the lot that we were not going to rent. Would you mind driving an S-type Jaguar? No, I won't mind that at all.

[5 : 13] Well, one kind deed led to another kind deed. I could tell you story after story how that when you do something kind for people, it's amazing how they in turn want to find something they can do for you.

Random Acts of Kindness. It's a wonderful book to read. We find in the Bible that Paul uses an interesting word. He uses the word labor three times.

I'm going to look at each of the three passages where he uses that word labor. Now, he doesn't use the word work because seemingly there is a difference between the word work and the word labor.

Some people go to work, but they do not labor. I was at an ACE convention and I was talking to parents and I was sitting at the table and I said, sir, this was in Michigan.

What do you do for a living? He said, I invent ice cream flavors. I said, excuse me? How long have you been doing that? He said, it's all I've done.

[6 : 30] He owns the Mackinac Creamery on Mackinac Island, but he names ice cream. If you've ever heard of paws and claws, he owns it.

If you've ever heard of moose tracks, he owns it. And any company that uses his name pays him royalties. He is a multimillionaire naming food.

I didn't know you could get paid for naming food. He said, we sell very little ice cream, though we do make money from that, but the most money comes in from the royalties of naming ice cream.

Now, I think to myself, that's his work, but he does not labor. There are other people who, when they go to work, they labor at their jobs. And Paul uses the word labor.

I think it's interesting that he does so. 2 Corinthians chapter 5 and verse 9. The Bible says this, wherefore we labor. Say that word with me, labor.

[7 : 32] Wherefore we labor, that whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him. Paul, why do you labor? Well, in 2 Corinthians here, chapter 5, verse 9, he says, I want God to be pleased.

That is a very good reason why we should exert ourself for the Lord, that God might be pleased with that which we do. I know this concept.

I was born and raised on a farm. I'm from the Meridian, Mississippi area. We lived out in the country about 20 miles out. Dad, when he would leave in the morning, would give tasks.

I want certain areas to be bush hogged. I want certain areas to be plowed. Now, we only had one vehicle, one truck. And when we played baseball during the summer, we needed that truck to go to our games or to go to practice.

And so when Dad would come home from work, if everything that he had asked us to do had been done, we were more apt to get the keys to the truck. If not, we didn't go anywhere.

[8 : 37] And also, you all try to do things a little bit extra. Dad, we also did this. We also did this. Oh, wonderful, wonderful. Oh, by the way, Dad, can we have keys to the truck tonight?

We have a game. When Dad was pleased, things went well. And I think this is what Paul is getting at. He wants God to be pleased with that which he's doing.

So he begins to give us reasons here why he labors and why he serves God. The second reason is in verse 10. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ that everyone may receive the things done in his body according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

Secondly, Paul says this. Folks, one day we're going to stand before God and give an account for the things that we've done. And Paul simply says this.

I want the accounting to go well. I think that ought to be the desire of every Christian to stand before God and want that accounting to go well before the Lord. The third reason is in verse 11.

[9 : 42] Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord. Watch the labor. We persuade men. In other words, we try to do everything we can to persuade people regarding the claims of Christ while we can because we understand what happens to people who die without Jesus Christ.

They spend an eternity in hell. You say, why do you give yourself, Paul? Why are you giving yourself away for Christ? Because I understand what happens to these people if they do not believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

That's a good reason. The fourth reason is found in verse 14. For the love of Christ constraineth us because we thus judge that if one died for all, then we're all dead.

For the love of Christ constraineth us. Notice what he did not say. Paul, why do you serve God? Well, I serve him because I love him. It's not what he said.

He said, I serve him because he loved me. And because of the love that Christ gave toward me, I cannot help but serve God because of such great love.

[10 : 53] Then there's a fifth reason in verse 17. Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he's a new creature. All things have passed away. Behold, all things have become new.

Paul, why do you serve God? Because he changed me. Paul realized that his life was changed, not of his own doing. Paul hated the church.

Paul put Christians in prison. But one day on the road to Damascus, God got a hold of him and God changed his life. Years ago, Hartsville, South Carolina, I met a man.

I knew nothing about his past. But he had been the town drunk in Hartsville, South Carolina. He was an older man. Town drunk.

One night, a group of teenage boys beat him up and literally beat one eye out of his head. He was in the hospital, Hartsville, South Carolina. Tom Lancaster, the pastor of the church where I was serving, went to visit him in the hospital and won him to the Lord.

[12 : 04] But everybody thought, he'll never change. Soon as he gets out of the hospital, he'll be back on the bottle. He's the town drunk. It'll have no effect on him. But it did.

He truly became a saved individual and his life drastically changed. While he was in the hospital, he started reading the Bible.

When he got out of the hospital, every day he would read the Bible. When I met him, he was the adult Sunday school teacher. I knew nothing about his past.

When I sat in his class, I thought to myself, this is obviously the most godly man I've ever met in my life. He could quote so many passages of scripture from heart.

The ministerial association in Hartsville, South Carolina made a rule that preachers could only visit their own church members in the hospital.

[13 : 03] Because people were getting upset that other people were getting other people's church members. That applied to all the preachers. But it didn't apply to Hudson King. Hudson King would go to the hospital and he'd go from room to room to room in the hospital every single day winning people to the Lord.

It was absolutely amazing how many Hudson King won to the Lord. He did not pick himself up by his own bootstraps. God miraculously changed his life at the day of salvation.

And that's what Paul could say. He said, he's made me a new creature and that's why I serve him. Well, he gives us a sixth reason. The sixth reason is found in verse 18.

And all things are of God who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ. Watch this carefully. And hath given to us, we who are saved, the ministry of reconciliation.

Hey, Paul, why do you serve God? Why do you give yourself away for this man? Because it's my duty. Did you catch that? He hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation.

[14 : 15] What's that? We cannot save anybody. That's God's work. But our job is to bring people to the Lord that they might be reconciled with him.

Our job is to bring people to church so they can hear the gospel. Our job is to bring people and introduce them to Jesus Christ who can change their life. And that's the ministry of reconciliation in which we have a part of.

It's our duty to do so. The seventh reason is in verse 20. Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ.

Hey, Paul, why do you serve God? Why do you give yourself away for this man? Because I'm a representative. I'm an ambassador. I have a very high position. And we all do.

Turn to the person beside you and use their first name or their last name, either one, and say, hi, ambassador so and so. Everyone, turn to the person beside you and say, hi, ambassador so and so.

[15 : 19] You are an ambassador. I was in Dublin, Ireland. That's where my family name comes from, Dublin, Ireland. I was preaching on one side of town, staying on another side of town.

And every day, I would drive by the ambassador's house for the United States. And quite frankly, in the time that I was there, Dublin was in a very poor condition.

But the ambassador's house, when you drove by it, was a mansion. Wrought iron fence around it. Beautiful, beautiful house. I think one of the Kennedy family was living in it at the time.

I'd drive by every day and I'd think, you don't have anything on me. You're an ambassador for one nation, the United States. But I'm an ambassador for the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords.

I have a very high position. And so do you. And Paul realized that. And that's the reason he said, I serve God, because I realize I'm a representative.

[16 : 21] I'm an ambassador for the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. And then there's another reason. If the first seven reasons are not sufficient enough for you to think you ought to serve God, then perhaps the eighth one is, verse 21.

For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. Paul, why do you serve God?

Because he took all my sin away. And he's made me righteous before God. The 50th anniversary of Awana Clubs International, I was there to speak.

Bobby Finch, Rob Diaz did music for me. We were there to provide music. Erwin Lutzer from Moody spoke also. I do not remember the message, but I remember two illustrations.

Probably never forget them. Illustration number one. Erwin Lutzer had preached a message on radio regarding the forgiveness of God.

[17 : 37] That God could forgive all manner of sin. Erwin Lutzer, in turn, wrote him a letter back.

Erwin Lutzer, in turn, wrote him a letter back. And in the letter basically said, each of us have traveled our roads of life. I have traveled my road. You have traveled your road.

And if I look at our roads, there are ruts that have been cut in the road. Ruts that were caused by our sin.

I look down my road, he said, and there are ruts in my road. I look down your road, and there are ruts in yours. But yours perhaps may be deeper than mine. But we both have ruts.

But when it snows, the snow covers our roads equally. So that when I look down your road, it looks exactly as mine. And though your sin be as scarlet, it shall be as white as snow.

[18 : 50] God covers all sin, all manner of sin. Wonderful illustration. But then the second illustration. I need two books. Are there two books handy anywhere?

Okay, if they're not, I'll have to just imagine they are. He said, I have two books. One book, The Life and Times of Erwin Lutzer. The other book, Life and Times of Jesus Christ.

When I take my book, Life and Times of Erwin Lutzer, and I open and turn the pages, I see nothing but ungodliness. I see unrighteousness.

I see all the bad things that I did in my life as I turn through the pages. It's not a very wonderful book to look at. But I take the book of Jesus Christ and I open it and I see nothing but the righteousness of God.

Page after page after page, the righteousness of God. He said, you know what God did for you when you got saved? He took your book, took the contents out, and slid his in.

[19 : 54] So that now when you open the book, The Life and Times of Erwin Lutzer or The Life and Times of Steve Piggott, when you open the book, all you see is the righteousness of God. He hath made us righteous, though we are not righteous at all.

He has taken our sin away, and in the eyes of God, because we have trusted in Jesus Christ as Savior, He has made us righteous before God.

Paul said, that's why I labor for Him. The second passage, 1 Corinthians, turn there. 1 Corinthians, very familiar passage of Scripture. Paul, why do you labor? He gave us eight reasons.

Now He's going to give us another. In 1 Corinthians 15 and verse 10, the word grace appears three times, and it's interesting how it is used.

1 Corinthians 15, 10, But by the grace of God, I am what I am. And His grace, which was bestowed upon me, was not in vain.

[21 : 00] But I labored, there it is again, say that word, labored. I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God, which was with me.

Three times the word grace appears. Notice them, first time. But by the grace of God, I am what I am. Well, what is He? If you go back to verse 8, He says, I'm one born out of due time.

He's one born of an ill birth. He's one born in sin. When He looks at Himself as Himself, He sees nothing but ungodliness.

But what is He now? He's an apostle. He has a high position. By the grace of God, I am what I am. It's not something that I've created of myself, but God has made me what I am.

By the grace of God, I am what I am. And then notice, and His grace, this gift that was given to me, and His grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain.

[22 : 05] Interesting thought. It's as if the grace of God is given to some in vain. Because they do nothing for the King of Kings.

They have the gift of God, but they do nothing in laboring for the Lord. But He said, look, this gift that was given to me, it was not in vain.

But I labored more abundantly than they all. Seems to be a statement of pride, doesn't it? I do more than you do. I do more than you do.

I labor more than anybody. It's not a statement of pride. It's a statement of gratitude. His grace, this gift that was given to me, causes me just to labor abundantly for the Lord.

And then the third time it is used, yet not I. This is not my work. But God has graced me to do the things I do.

[23 : 12] And whenever we start to step out and do something for God, God gives us the ability, gracing us with the ability to talk, to do the things He wants us to do.

It's not our work. It's God's work. But He will work through us. He will grace us with the ability to do the things He wants us to do. So, Paul, why do you serve God?

The reason? I'm grateful. Years ago, I think it was a man in Nielchick, Alaska. When I was at his church, he told me of someone in Alaska who owned a rest haven for preachers, a place where you could go in Kihei, Maui, Hawaii, and stay free of charge.

So, he gave me the number, and I called the lady. When I called the lady, I found that it was true that a preacher could go and stay in Kihei at the Brewster Rest Haven, and you could stay absolutely free of charge.

And I said, well, what would be required of me? And she says, the only thing that we would ask is that you send a thank you note. Duh.

[24 : 26] If you give me two weeks in Hawaii, I will write you a thank you note, and I will say thank you. She said, and I'll never forget it. She said, you'll be amazed how few we get.

Now, think that through. Who's staying there? People in ministry. Who's staying there? Preachers. Who's not writing a thank you note?

Preachers. That was a heartbreaking statement to hear. But sometimes I think we live our lives expressing ungratefulness for all the things God's done for us.

Paul said the reason I serve him is because above all, I'm just grateful to God for what he's done for me. And that is a wonderful, motivating reason.

But then the last one, and the one I've been trying to get to all morning, is found in 1 Corinthians, beginning with chapter 3.

[25 : 30] So far, we've had nine reasons why Paul labored, and this is going to be the last one. In 1 Corinthians chapter 3, we realize what's happening here.

There's a problem in the church. Paul's addressing the problem. And in verses 1 through 9, And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ.

I have fed you with milk and not with meat, for hitherto you were not able to bear it, neither yet now are you able. For you're yet carnal. For whereas there is among you envying and strife and divisions, are you not carnal?

And walk as men? For while one saith, I am of Paul, and another, well, I am of Apollos. Are you not carnal?

Who then is Paul? And who is Apollos? But ministers, servants, by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man.

[26 : 41] I, Paul said, I have planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So then, neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase.

Now, he that planteth and he that watereth are one, and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor. Say the word again, labor.

For ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building. And then chapter 4. So let a man so account of us. Who?

Those who follow after Paul, those who follow after Apollos, let a man so account of us, all of us, as of the ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.

That word minister is the word for servant. It's the word for slave. Let a man so account of us, all of us, as simply the servants, the slaves.

[27 : 50] It is also translated as the under rower. The under rower was the servant, perhaps in the lower part of the ship, whose responsibility was just to row so the ship might be taken where it was to go.

Years ago, I read a book by Stuart Briscoe. I do not remember anything about the book, but I remember one illustration.

You get the point? Give me your illustrations, I'll leave a happy person. One illustration that I'll never forget. He described the Christian in these words.

The task of the Christian is to simply pull on the oars to take the master of the ship, the Lord Jesus Christ, into the waters of his choosing that he might perform his good pleasure when he arrives.

I want you to listen to it again. The task of the Christian is to faithfully pull on the oars to take the master of the ship into the waters of his choosing that he might perform his good pleasure when he arrives.

[29 : 11] That is a powerful statement. We do not decide where the ship goes. The Lord does. He's the captain of the ship. We are simply servants to take him to the waters of his choosing that he might perform his good pleasure when he arrives.

He said there are several things we can do with our oar. We can take our oar out of the water and put it in our lap while all the others are rowing feverishly.

Row! Row! Row! Row! You're doing a good job! Row! How would you feel toward that one who's sitting there enjoying the trip and doing absolutely nothing?

He said there's something else you can do with your oar. You can take it out of the water and hit the other people on the head with it. That's what was happening in this passage of Scripture.

There was division. There was division among them. They were fighting among one another. There were two things coming to play at this point. Number one, I'm not doing my job and I'm keeping you from doing yours.

[30 : 26] Because it's hard to do your job when people are beating up on you. I've been in the ministry 52 years and I have seen a lot of people in ministry be beaten up in ministry.

It's a sad thing to witness. So much so that I've seen many people get out of the ministry because of it. There's something else I could do with the oar.

I could take the oar out of the water and despise it and say, I am sick of this and break it and throw it away. I don't want anything to do with it. And I'll never forget what Briscoe said next.

Just remember who it was who gave you the oar and who allowed you to be on his ship. We ought never despise the opportunity of serving the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords.

Because it is a very high privilege. And I believe that's what Paul is getting at in this whole passage.

[31 : 36] Why do you serve God? Because I'm privileged. I'm privileged to be saved. I'm privileged to be on his ship.

I'm privileged to have a ministry. I'm privileged to have an oar. I'm privileged to be one that can do anything for the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords.

All of these reasons Paul gives why he labors for the Lord. And I believe this.

I believe every child of God ought to find something that they can do. Purposefully do for the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords.

And all of us ought to be pulling on the oars. There's no telling what God can do if we labor for him.

[32 : 41] Father, I pray that we would take to heart these thoughts of the Apostle Paul. He set himself as an example to the believers.

And certainly he can be an example to us today as to why we should be laboring for the Lord.

Lord, any one of these reasons would be enough. But my, my, my. All of them together. Together. We have really.

No excuse. Of giving our all. For what you have done for us. I'm just going to ask a simple question before perhaps musicians come back.

And that question is this. How many would say, Brother Steve. Hmm. I need to do more. I need to labor more.

[33 : 50] Out of gratitude. Out of privilege. I need to do more for the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. Just slip your hands there and say, Brother Steve, that's me.

Father, you see our hands, you know our heart. And that's our desire. To do more for you than we've done in the past. In Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen.

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