

AFTER ALL THESE YEARS, WHY DO YOU KEEP DOING IT?

Taught by Ted Wood

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O God, have mercy on me according to your steadfast love. According to your abundant mercy, blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin, for I know my transgression, and my sin is ever before me. Against you, and you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words, and blameless in your judgment. Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me. Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being, and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean. Wash me and I shall be whiter than snow. Let me hear joy and gladness. Let the bones that you have broken rejoice. Hide your face from my sins and blot out my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. We pray for Becky, Bruce's wife. Lord, in your earthly life, you laid hands on people and they were healed. We pray now, in the spirit, that you lay hands on Becky and heal her and give Bruce strength so that both Becky and Bruce may rejoice in your salvation. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Bruce called me up. I was just coming down Route 8 from being up in Erie for two days. I was tired. I was looking forward to getting home and just crashing and have a glass of wine, and it didn't work out that way. Plus my car was making a funny sound, so I had a lot of things on my mind. He said, about his wife having surgery, "Would you take the class?" I said, "What do you think I ought to teach on, Bruce?" He said, "Well, I'm doing the message on purity of heart," and I said, "Well, you've got the wrong guy for that." {LAUGHTER} Bruce, you know, he comes across sometimes as starchy, but he's very sharp, he said, "Well why do you think I asked you to do it?" {LAUGHTER} He said, "That means I don't have to do it."

I sat down in front of the computer and I started throwing spaghetti on the wall to see what would stick, in my mind. Sig was good enough to help me out and get a number of copies made. Then I thought about it again this morning. What I'm going to just use, the handout is just there, I'm going to pull stuff from it, because even since I've put that together, my mind has changed on a number of items, and I've gotten some greater clarity.

I said to Sig, "Well, what do you think I ought to be talking about since I'm not going to be talking about purity of heart?" He said, "Well why don't you talk about the question you asked last Friday," which was Sig, help me out. If you could just say loudly, reiterate that conversation, what Bruce said and then what I asked.

Sig: You directed it to Bruce about why do you still keep doing it after all these years.

You remember that? He talked about his thought life. He talked about the exercises he goes through to control his thought life. The prayer that he makes, which is, "Lord, if I continue down this road of thought, I'm going to be in big trouble," and I thought those were all very helpful. But then he confessed that he still was struggling. I said, "Well Bruce, after all the things you've gone through in your life, and how much you study the word, and how disciplined you are," because I'm not a disciplined person—I say that's my DNA, but maybe that's just an excuse. But you know, Bruce is a very self-disciplined person. I asked him once, I said "Do you feel that you're a very self-disciplined guy," and he says, "Yes, I am." I said, "I'm really not that self-disciplined. I'm more spontaneous, whatever comes into my mind at the time, so after all of that, why do you keep thinking these things? And why do you keep doing them?"

This is a question that I struggle with. It's a big question in my mind. Some of you are getting tired of

hearing me talking about it. Brother Rich was good enough to confront me the other day and say, “Why do you keep ruminating on these things? We’re getting weary of hearing about it.” But nonetheless, I think some of the answers that I hear to that question, “Why do you keep doing it?” I’m not very satisfied with those answers. I think they tend to be shallow and trite, and I’m always searching for something that’s more profoundly Christ and God centered, very theocentric.

I’m also driven by a good deal of curiosity. I get very curious about...some of you are like this...I’m very curious about stuff. I’ll get up in the middle of the night and go to look on the Internet to find, not pornography, but to, not that I’m above that temptation, but to look something up that just occurred to me in my mind. So I’m driven by curiosity. I’m also driven by a fair amount of restlessness in my soul, and my soul tends to be somewhat restless. It makes me question a lot of stuff and try to think it through.

When we listen to Bruce, in his teaching—and I’m not going to try to do purity of heart, because my gosh, that takes a great insight and study into that, and I’ve never done that study—we’re caught in this tension in the Christian life. I’m just going to raise some of these issues, and you all can respond to them. I’m going to give you some Scripture, and I’m also going to give you some incidences.

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” Bruce reminded us the good person, I’m looking at my handout, “The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.” (Luke 6:45) I don’t know, did you all find that encouraging? {LAUGHTER} I mean, really, out of the abundance of your...

***Audience Member:** It’s the Word of God.*

It is the Word of God, but did you find that Word of God encouraging? Out of the abundance of your heart, your mouth speaks. Now some of us don’t sin very much in that area, because we are by nature, we don’t talk very much. But that has nothing to do with your sanctification. It has more to do with how you’re wired and your personality type.

I always tell my wife that she is the one who commits sins of, I’m the one who commits sins of commission, and she commits sins of omission. I’m a great committer, and she’s a great ommitter. But that has nothing to do with how really sanctified my heart is or hers is. It just happens to be that she’s wired to say less things that are hurtful or sinful or whatever.

I’m stuck with that verse. I’m also stuck with the tension in these two verses, and these kind of seem to exhibit the tension that we walk in, in our Christian life. One is out of 2 Corinthians 5:17, “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.” That’s a fantastic statement. To me, it’s the foundational statement about what it means to live as a Christian. “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.” The problem is that there is a lot of old in me that hasn’t passed away, or at least that’s what appears to be the case.

That’s on one side, “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.” That’s on one side. On the other side, you have from Romans 7, that great series of verses...what is that...11 verses that Paul, like, all of a sudden opens up his heart and we can really see the things he’s wrestling with. In that, he says, “Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?” (Romans 7: 14-25) On one hand he says that I’m a new creation in Christ; the old has passed away; behold, the new has come, and then on the other hand, wretched man that I am, who will deliver me from this body of death? That is a tension. That’s not done away with by simply saying, “Try harder,” or “Do better,” or “Follow these steps and you’ll get better,” or “Every day in every way.” I don’t find that very satisfying when I think of the immensity of who God is. When Sig and I were talking about this last night, he said to me, “We

forget how big God is.

In light of this, once again, brothers, I apologize. It's by the grace of God I'm flying by the seat of my pants here. I stumbled...in looking on the various religious Christian and other things on YouTube, I came across a very interesting conversation with a missionary, and I thought it was so interesting that I actually transcribed it and I've given it to you here.

This missionary is trying to explain to another person, in this YouTube video, what it means to follow Christ. You may want to follow; that's number three. Here's what the missionary said, "We need to keep the commandments that Jesus Christ has given us. But He also gives us his grace, strength and power when we don't have the strength ourselves. We need to do all we can do and He will help us the rest of the way. It's not possible for us to be perfect, so the little part – the things we can't do, the things we can't be perfect in – he helps us the rest of the way. True repentance is when someone changes their acts, changes their life to follow Christ. So, if you truly repent for something that means you're going to never do it again. So if you go back to doing it, you really don't have true repentance. We can't totally abandon sin because we are not perfect, but we can try our best and Jesus Christ will help us. We can choose to always reject it when temptation comes, but we can't totally put it off because we're not perfect. The grace of God applies when we've given all we can. If I do everything I can then Christ will help me, but if not then I'm on my own."

What do you think about that? How do you react to what that missionary is saying in terms of what it means to be a Christian, walk in the Christian life? What did he say?

***Audience Member:** I think he's wrong.*

In what way is he wrong?

***Audience Member:** The last sentence, "If I do everything I can, then Christ will help me, but if not, I'm on my own." I don't think you're ever on your own.*

Okay, well that's a true statement. But maybe there's a more profound issue here.

***Audience Member:** Ted, what we have to recognize is [UNCLEAR] go back to the tension verses that you talked about. [UNCLEAR] in Christ he's new creation, the old has passed away; behold the new has come. We have to understand [UNCLEAR] in the Greek is a process of purification. It's moving from one place to another place. As we move from one place to another, it's a growth that's incumbent upon us.*

Right.

***Audience Member:** And that's why when Paul wrestled, he was just opening himself up and letting us see exactly what we wrestle with.*

Right.

***Audience Member:** Because a lot of us wrestle with this daily.*

Yes. Some of us wrestle with it...some?

***Audience Member:** All of us wrestle with it. {LAUGHTER} But we wrestle with it daily. What we have to understand is, like Bruce taught us a while back, he said, "Listen, when you came to Christ, you used*

to walk in sin interrupted by occasions of righteousness; now you walk in righteousness interrupted by occasional sin.” That’s why this verse cannot be true [UNCLEAR]. What Jack just said absolutely cannot be true because you’re never on your own. Our God is always here with us.

Okay. Thank you. What else do you see in there?

Audience Member: *Do you ever reach true repentance? You know what I mean?*

[UNCLEAR], but if you’re really, really repentant, so just not really repentant. {LAUGHTER}. But really, really repentant.

Audience Member: *That says if you truly repent for something that means you’re not going never do it again. Of course, we all fall short all the time. Do you ever reach true repentance?*

Do you reach 90% repentance? How about 80% repentance? Seventy? Sixty? It’s also interesting this person says, the missionary says, basically he says we do all we can and God makes up the rest. It’s kind of a view, when I hear some people talk this way, I had the kind of sense that really I’ve been saved, Jesus died for my sins, I’m forgiven, I have a home in heaven, but basically, I’m kind of on my own to do the best I can, but there’s always Jesus out there ready to encourage me and strengthen me. But it’s really my life that’s doing it. It’s not him that’s doing it. He’s the encourager. He’s the energizer. He’s the reminder. He’s the empowerer. But in the final analysis, it’s still me doing it.

Audience Member: *It’s curious because I haven’t figured this one out yet either. [UNCLEAR] struggle with this one, but it has to be an intentional responsibility. We have that responsibility, but it’s up to us. Even though we have this intentional responsibility, it’s not up to us. It makes no [UNCLEAR] sense to me, so I can’t wait to get [UNCLEAR]...*

Well, the question might be where is that responsibility coming from? Is it your responsibility? Is it driven by you or is it driven by him?

Audience Member: *So I guess maybe another way of saying it is what is that motivation? The motivation is love, I realize the gift given to me and I want to show my love [UNCLEAR]. That’s the motivation.*

That’s an excellent point; I want to get to that. It’s interesting that the missionary...

Sig: *I wanted take you back to what Carl is saying about transformation, this new mind, like we had talked last night. [UNCLEAR] tell people, they were worried about free nation versus a body being put in a casket in the ground [UNCLEAR] resurrection, right? And then I began reading, studying and realized that God doesn’t like clean up the old body and put it back together and refurbish it and you get another warranty on it. He gives us a new body. It’s not like, okay, you were really shitty before and now Jesus is going to...*

That was a theological word. {LAUGHTER} It’s from the Greek for...

Sig: [UNCLEAR]...

It’s Sig’s intertestamental period.

Sig: *Anyway, the point I was making that we don’t get a refurbished body, it’s all new. The old man is hanging around and we’re trying to start, we’re trying to start with something that really is brand new*

and let go of...so it's new. It's not like the old one. I think that's sometimes hard to grasp. We're different. We're not going [UNCLEAR] and that's the tension I think maybe Brian was referring to. Why aren't I there yet? Why can't I do this?

Right.

Audience Member: [UNCLEAR]...

I agree. It is too shallow. And it's not very satisfying, if you're honest with yourself. It's interesting that this missionary actually, this is a trick, this missionary is a Mormon missionary, trying to explain...but it's interesting how close what he says comes to what you hear from the pulpit. It's like I do all I can and then Jesus makes up that gap. Once again, it's me separated from Jesus in fact.

Now it's interesting, there was a sermon that as preached. As you know, some of the pastors in this church get very nervous because they see...Mark Helsel said, "I saw you taking notes on my sermon," but I always take notes and often I just throw them away. I was listening to a sermon and it was on Philippians 2:12-13, which reads, "work out your salvation with fear and trembling, ¹³for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose." "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling, ¹³for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose." This captures, this verse is a critical verse in capturing that tension.

It's interesting that the pastor who preached on this sought to tackle this verse. I just wanted to share with you, and I'm not being critical, I'm just using this as an illustration.

Audience Member: *Is this the Mormon pastor?*

This is not a Mormon. This is not a Mormon pastor. He's a Presbyterian, which makes it worse. {LAUGHTER} I'm sorry. That was for you, Don. He was PCA.

The pastor says, just bear with me, "How does Jesus change your life? Is it up to God or all up to us? Or a combination of the two? There is God's part and there is man's part. Man's part is work out your salvation with fear and trembling. God's part is "for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose." So far, so good. That sounded very good, didn't it? There's man's part. That's man's responsibility. Work out your salvation. And there's God's part, "for it is God who works in you."

Then, during that 30 minute sermon, two minutes was spent on God's part, and 28 minutes was spent on man's part, because that's where we're comfortable. We are comfortable talking about what I need to do, and we are not very comfortable talking about what God is doing, has done and will do.

It's interesting that the sermon went on to say, "there are three ways that God works." I said, "Great! We're going to talk about what God is doing." These are the three ways that God will work. He said, "First of all, through his Word. But we choose to read the Word of God, and if we don't choose to read the Word of God, then we're not growing in our faith. You're fighting for your soul, and it depends on you whether you are in the Word. So on God's part, one of the parts of God's part is the Word. But it really is up to you to choose to read that Word. If you don't read it, you won't grow." The second thing he talked about was the Holy Spirit. That's on God's part. But he says, "You choose to yield to the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit's job is to empower you. Moment by moment you choose whose going to be in control." Does that encourage you? Moment by moment you choose whose going to be in control.

Audience Member: *Amen.*

That makes you feel good. I mean, think about it realistically, guys. Is that good news or bad news?

Audience Member: Bad news.

Thirdly, he said, he talked about God's, on God's responsibility, his side, he talked about circumstances. But when he talked about circumstances in our life, he said, "We need to choose how we're going to respond to these circumstances. What happens in you is your choice." The word choice was used 27 times in that sermon. This is part of this message. It sounds very similar, in my mind, to what the Mormon's are saying. Once again, I'm very fond of this pastor, but I don't agree with the message.

It's interesting that when Bruce called me up at 6:45 on my way down Route 8, on the way home to have a glass of wine and to chill out and to get in my PJ's and watch something on TV, he said, "My wife's going in for surgery. Would you teach the class tomorrow?" Of course, in my flesh, what I immediately say is, you know, "Heck no. I mean, this is quite an imposition. You don't know what kind of day I've had."

But you know, one of the last verses I have there, in this handout, the last verse is 2 Corinthians 5:14, which that whole section, 5th chapter of 2 Corinthians, "The love of Christ controls us." Now it's interesting, that Greek word "control" can be translated a number of ways. The NIV translates it, "The love of Christ compels us." Now look how this word "control" gets translated. Pressed together. The love of Christ presses together, presses me. The love of Christ confines me. The love of Christ compels me. The love of Christ afflicts me, like a sickness.

So when Bruce asked me that question...my wife, when we later discussed it, she said, "Well what did you say to him?" Basically, Ted what choice did you make? I said, "There really wasn't a choice, because the love of Christ compels me." This is a supernatural desire, number one, to teach the Word, and number two, to love my brother, Bruce. I really, I suspect you could say it was a choice, but in fact, it didn't strike me as a choice. It struck me as something I was compelled to do.

Now think about this choice, this decision, to teach this class this morning. Look at it from an unregenerate standpoint and a regenerate standpoint. The unregenerate man does not love the Word of God. He finds it, if not repulsive, he finds it impossible to understand, and he finds it irrelevant. For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son—and the unregenerate man goes, "Whatever." In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth, "Whatever." Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts, heaven and earth is full of your glory, "Whatever."

Naturally, that is my reaction to the Word of God, but as a regenerate person, whose been given the life of Christ, I love the Word, even though it makes me very uncomfortable and it's very disturbing at times. But I love reading that. So first of all, that is a compulsion that God has given me. The second compulsion is Bruce himself. He has these great football stories to tell. I was a track guy, 40 pounds ago in college, and I was on the same hall at William and Mary as the football team. They beat us up in the toilet when they found us. They called us the Skeleton Squad. I don't have a special fondness for football players. {LAUGHTER}

Think about this. Standing in front of a urinal, trying to do your business, just before you went to your dorm room, and in walks this big New Jersey—they recruited out of New Jersey that year—football guy, freshman, full of himself, and wants to know what you're doing there. I had to look down the hall to be sure none of them were there. I'd run down to the toilet, go in and get out as fast as I could. So I don't naturally love football players. But God has given me a supernatural love for Bruce. We're very different types of personalities. So indeed, the reason I acted, I responded to Bruce's request and acted is

because it was supernatural compulsion. Woo, that's getting some reaction.

***Audience Member:** You said the word "choices" and I find that my entire life, my entire day, is made up of choices. Whether I make a great choice or a bad choice, but in every case, it boils down to whether or not I am self-centered individual or I am God-centered or other-centered individual, which is what you've made that decision. You made that choice, not to be self-centered.*

Okay. What do you think about that? How are you doing? How are you doing with your choices not to be self-centered? I mean, that's really what comes down to be the question. How are you doing? Do you get it right sometimes? What about 100% of the time? What about 90% of the time? What about 80% of the time? I mean, let's be honest, guys. Let's quit saying this when it's simply not true. The world lives by choices. The child of God lives by the power, empowering, overwhelming, compelling power of the Holy Spirit, so that the love of Christ compels me. I think we often underestimate how profoundly lost we are.

***Audience Member:** Are or were?*

Were, Don, and existentially as we live, are. In Christ, I'm a new creation, but in fact, in my behavior, I act like I'm lost.

***Audience Member:** My take away from last week was that we're powerless, I mean, that was pretty much it. But I'm curious what your thoughts are on, I mean, kind of the way, I guess, I've always thought about it is work at it like it depends 100% on you, pray about it like it depends 100% on God. So I'm curious what your thoughts are on that, because it is, I mean, as a gentleman said over there said, our whole life is a series of choices, whether we like it or not, I mean, it's really a matter of do we turn to God or do we turn to the world.*

Right. Why do you choose one or the other? It's within you? The power is within you?

***Audience Member:** No, we're powerless. That's what I'm saying.*

So if you're powerless, and yet it depends on your choices to make...I think there's a better answer here.

***Tom:** There's an issue that you brought up that you've sort of gone by it's that who does the choosing, whether we do the choosing or has God chosen [UNCLEAR] listen to Bruce preach to us. It seems pretty clear to me God's chosen us. There's a whole element there about this matter of choice and who has the control. I'm sort of starting to sway toward the idea that we're not in control at all. God's in control. He's the one that has motivated us, through the Holy Spirit, to seek Scripture and to be convicted by the Holy Spirit.*

Before we get too far away, because this is going to begin to sound like what is theologically called "antinomianism," which says those who don't believe in any rules. So before I get accused of that, let me just, and then I'll open it up for further discussion. Let me just look at what, indeed, who we are.

I'm looking at number 5b on the handout. This is a very...remember that verse that says, "If anyone is in Christ, he's a new creation." What's the verse that precedes that, which is even perhaps more interesting than that verse. That verse that we all know, "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation." Look at what Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5:16. He says, "From now on, now that we've been regenerated and born again, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh." "We regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he's a new creation."

Paul is making a very profound statement about the way we look at what reality is and who we are and who others are. He says, “Before, before I was regenerated, I looked at everything from a human perspective, but now that I’m in Christ, I look at everything from Christ’s perspective.” What that means is I begin to look at who I am differently. The world sees a situation as this—I’m here, I need to do better. I need to be empowered, instructed, motivated, enthused. I need something to do that to me, but I’m still out here doing it. That’s the way the flesh looks at it.

But when you’re in Christ, you actually receive, not the help of Christ, or the encouragement of Christ, you actually receive him himself, so that the life that I now live it’s no longer I who live, Paul says, but Christ who lives in me. What is he there to do? Is he there to encourage you and strengthen you? No, he is there to be your life. If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.

How is that possible? That is only possible when Christ is my life. Is Christ my life because I choose it and work hard at it? No, the fact of the matter is Christ is my life. Christ my life, Paul says that. It’s no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. That becomes, and therefore the life I now live in the flesh, he goes on to say, that is the life I live out in this world, and with myself and with others, a life I now live in the flesh, I live by what? Choices by faith. And the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.

In Christ, when Christ is in you, he becomes your life. The way our whole lives are acted out from that point is by faith. We’re not simply saved by faith, we grow and mature by faith because it’s always there a question, the faith is indeed [UNCLEAR] true.

***Audience Member:** Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:9-10, he says that, “⁹For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. ¹⁰But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.”*

Yes. So what Paul says, he was the least deserving, and yet grace was given to him as a result of that grace, he worked harder than anyone else. Yet, it wasn’t him working; it was the grace of God working in him.

***Audience Member:** Jerry Bridges says about when you buy a suit. Do you buy separates? Or does the jacket and pants come together? So is grace and not just justification, but...*

Yeah, the whole life we begin to live.

***Audience Member:** It’s a suit; it goes together.*

When we say, “If anyone is in Christ, he’s a new creation,” I don’t look that way, I don’t act that way. But in fact, I am that. Being in Christ, I’m all that I can ever hope to be. I think that Ted Wood understands why we continue to struggle is I’m in the process of experiencing more of what I already am. It’s not that I’m trying to get there; I’m already there.

Paul talks about that in Romans 6, where he talks about the fact that I’ve been buried with him, I’ve been raised with him. In Ephesians, I’ve been made to sit with him in the heavenly places. In essence, when I was put into Christ, wherever he went, I went with him. He became my life, whether I feel like he is or act like he is, in fact, he is. The only reason I know that is not because I see it, but because I believe it by faith. Blessed is he who believes and has not seen. I believe it. I believe that I’m already arrived. The whole Christian experience is about experiencing that life that I’ve already been given.

Audience Member: *From what I see in Scripture, especially what's been taught here, is that it's given. This new life has been given us, that we are given the mind of Christ. That we don't choose it, it chooses us. So the choice matter is, it's now God is searching for man that will worship him in spirit, and truth.*

Yes.

Audience Member: *So if worship is a lifestyle and how we live and we're spirit led, we're not choosing. He's living his life through us.*

Right.

Audience Member: *I'm going to be a theologian...that's what I hear. Now the sin issue, which I struggle with constantly, when Paul talks about taming the tongue, when you open this thing up, is it not sin in the world that stains us. It's sin.*

I think we get surprised by our own sin and that of others. I have a good family friend who has called me up and they're counseling with a young man who's been a worship leader at a church. He's gotten involved with a married woman, but it's okay because she's getting divorced. I was being facetious. Don, you didn't see my face, but it was a face of facetiousness. {LAUGHTER} His mother is, of course, very upset about this. His mother says, because she really is very keen on this you've got to keep choosing to do the right thing, she says, "How could he do this? He's led so many people to Christ." I said, "You underestimate how sinful he is, how much flesh there is still operating. You're looking at what he's doing, and that's not the point." She will always be...the thing is I said to her, "You're disappointed in your son's behavior, but how are you doing? Actually, your behavior is just as bad as his is, but not in that way, in other ways." She didn't believe that was true because she believes she's doing a better job because she's made the right choices.

Audience Member: [UNCLEAR]...It seems like [UNCLEAR] at least in my mind, again [UNCLEAR], is the confusion between what we were pre-new life...

Yeah, before being regenerated.

Audience Member: *Yeah I Corinthians [UNCLEAR] is all foolishness to me. Alright. Versus what we are after. I think we have to absolutely separate out those two, and maybe [UNCLEAR]. Then, once we are regenerate, once we've been given this gift of life, in that new life, there is a definite responsibility that we own, and one thing that comes to mind is Philippians 3:12 that says, "not that I've already obtained all this, but one thing is forget the past and press on [UNCLEAR]." So that, to me, tells me Paul is saying, "Hey, I screw up here. I'm not perfect. I make poor," and you're going to disagree with this, "choices," because, and I think Bruce has even said this, when I choose to sin, I choose to love that sin more than Christ. So you agree with that too. So I guess my confusion is how are we, how are we saying the same thing, but we're not, but [UNCLEAR] everything is...*

Right. That's an excellent distinction that you just made. I think what I would like to say is what I'm saying, unlike the sermon that I quoted to you, what I'm saying is that the natural inclination is to put the emphasis on my performance and look at how I'm doing. I'm saying let's, I am leaning in the other direction. I'm saying let's put the focus on what God is doing. If I look at what I'm doing, I despair. I'm not making near enough progress. I begin to ask myself, "Am I truly born again? Maybe I'm not. Look at what I'm doing." There goes that young gal down the street, and I am interested. I can look away. I do. Sometimes I don't. Now does that mean I'm not born again or I am flawed in some way? So if I keep looking at that, just as that for an example, I will despair. But if I look at my life in Christ, that

basically my life is hidden with God in Christ, that basically I have a new life, like I have great hope, and I begin to focus on what God is doing and not what I'm doing. Now I don't want to be...I only react to choice because I see it as the heavy emphasis in the culture and in the church message. That's what I'm saying.

***Audience Member:** I tend to agree, I think, Ted, with what you're saying. Choices are overshadowed by God. We put the emphasis on our human being as opposed to putting it on God. We go back to Ezekiel 36, just a couple thoughts, "Therefore say to the house of Israel blessed is the Lord God. It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, what I'm about to do, but for the sake of my Holy Name. I will vindicate the holiness of my great Name." Then it goes down and says, "And I will put my spirit within you and cause you to walk in my..." To cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances." So we sin constantly to God, is the focus. He's overcome that sin.*

Right. He trumps. He trumps our human what? Goodness in our human evil? He trumps both. I think, it's kind of maybe on a harder point, it's like this. Those of you who are married, you have tension with your wife. You just figure well if she could only do it my way, things would be much better.

{LAUGHTER} As you stay married longer—I've been married 30 years—you begin to get to the place where you say, "Well, you know, it's just not worth the fight." But sometimes I say unkind things to Diana. And you know what, in my flesh, I know she deserves that unkind comment. I mean, it's only just. It's only right, [UNCLEAR] right so to do. But you know...

***Audience Member:** Yeah, we heard this on the Internet.*

Yeah. {LAUGHTER} But she knows that already. By the way, she feels the same way toward me. But here's the thing. The love of Christ compels me. The Lord starts working on me. Now, in time, I go to her and I say, "I'm sorry. That was unkind. I was wrong. Please forgive me," or something to that effect. Now do I choose to do that? Well yes I do, but it's like there's a fire in my bones and I can't, I have to act, I mean, I'm being compelled to act. The love of Christ has infected me. It controls me. It presses me in. It compels me. That's the thing that happens. In the end, did I do it perfectly in the beginning? No, but in the end, the thrust, the trump, God trumps my self-righteousness. He trumps my self-satisfaction, he trumps that. Otherwise, its matter of self-help and you will always be either totally frustrated or you'll always but trying to tell me things are not as bad as they are. You'll be lying to yourself and lying to others. That's what happens. That's what happens with those who rely on human effort. They always either become self-righteous or they lie to themselves and others.

***Audience Member:** When Christ said to the woman caught in adultery go your way and sin no more, I always took that verse to mean don't be content with your sin. A quick metaphor, and it's a little bit of a rough one, but a friend of mine who's now deceased, an older man, he told me, he liked to drink and he told me that when he went into a bar, he'd pick the ugliest woman in the bar, and when she started looking good, he knew he had enough. That's what I think, we know once we have the Holy Spirit in us, we know what sin looks like. Once it starts looking good, we know, or we should know, that we're in trouble.*

Maybe we don't know it at the moment, I mean, that great saying, "It seemed like a good idea at the time," and that's what caught in. But given God will begin to work on us in that. That's not what happens with the natural man, the unregenerate man does not have that gift. He doesn't have the desire or the gift or the compulsion. We have a very unsettling compulsion, and that is to love God and love our brothers. That's what we're stuck with.

I guess my time is out. Thanks for being indulgent. We're going to close with a word of prayer.

Lord Jesus, we are always confronted by our own inadequacy and failing, our own lusting after the things of this world and the flesh and the devil. But Lord, your love is greater than that lust, and we look to you to let us experience and live that life that is already there within us. With thank you that we've been made new creations in Christ, not by what we see, but by your Word of Truth, and that our lives are hid with you in Christ, and we pray this in your name. Amen!