

A Preaching Life
Sermon by Pastor Joe Davis
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I. INTRODUCTION

Well, today I'm going to share with you the message I had prepared for January 8th, the day of the blizzard when we got snowed out from church. God evidently decided this message would be better for today! What I'd like to do today is share with you a practical tool that you and I can use to daily, moment-by-moment, re-work and re-adjust our priorities and the focus of our lives to be in line with the purposes for which God has created each of us in Christ. Do you know clearly what that purpose is and what the will of God is for your life?

Well, listen to how Paul describes the purpose for our lives in Ephesians 2, verses 8 to 10:

8 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; 9 not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. 10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

You see, God has made each of us new creations through faith in Christ so that we can live in relationship with him, be changed from the inside out, and walk into the good works he's prepared ahead of time for each of us to do, proclaiming or preaching with our lives and words just how great our God is!

And Consider 1 Peter chapter 2, verse 9:

But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;

We're a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, so that we can proclaim God's excellencies! You and I are proclaimers! Would you say that God's purpose for you is currently aligned with the purposes you have for your own life? Our lives in Christ are to be lives of transformation and proclaiming worship.

And think about this: How much time would you say you've spent in your life agonizing about what God's will is for your life? Sometimes we can be almost paralyzed trying to figure out where God is leading us and what specific choices he wants us to make. Well, let me share with you a couple more verses that tell us exactly what God's overarching will is for each of us throughout whatever daily choices we end up making. This one is in 1 Thessalonians 4, verses 3 and 7:

3 For this is the will of God, your sanctification;...7 For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification.

God's overarching will for you and I, no matter what our job is or where we live, is our sanctification. In other words, God's will for us is that we be transformed from the inside out to be like Jesus Christ in our daily lives and choices, as we learn to live out the new person we now are inside, by the power of God's Holy Spirit living within us.

J.D. Greear, in his book, *Jesus, Continued...*, points out that "...Scripture spends more time focused on the type of people we should be and less on the specifics of where and what we do. **When you become the kind of person God wants you to be, you will do what he wants you to do.** Nearly every time we find the phrase 'the will of God' in the Bible, it refers to the shaping of our moral character." God's will and purpose for each of us as his children, is that we be transformed and learn to walk as the new creations he's made us to be and into the good works he's already prepared for us, proclaiming or preaching with our lives and words how great he is and how others can know and walk with him.

At my last Convergence training, we were each challenged to develop an acrostic that would be a practical help to us personally in our own sanctification process. The idea was that we would develop an easily remembered tool we could use to daily remind ourselves of the essential truths God has given us to guide and help bring about our transformation to be like Christ...a way to, moment-by-moment, refocus our priorities and thinking to be in line with God's...*a way of setting our*

minds on things above, you might say. So what I want to do today is share the acrostic I developed along with the underlying Scriptures in the hopes that you will find it as useful as I have in my growth process and daily walk with God.

Now when I was developing my acrostic I initially came up with the word, "REACH," because it reminded me that my transformation only comes about as I learn to walk by the Spirit, reaching for his strength and power in everything. But I was really wanting a "P" so that I could include prayer somehow, knowing that continuous prayer is the key to walking by the Spirit. This led me to the word, "PREACH," which really got me excited, since I'm a preacher of course, but primarily because I've been learning a lot lately about preaching the gospel to myself...in other words, reminding myself constantly of the truths of who I am in Christ: the security I have in him / the forgiveness that's now mine / the power I have to defeat sin / the source of my hope and joy in God alone / the love of God that I now live in/ ...etc., etc...rehearsing these truths and challenging myself to believe them so that I can successfully face the daily battles and temptations and difficulties that come my way.

But the funny thing is, that the "P" in PREACH didn't end up standing for prayer. Instead, God led me in a different direction and it ended up representing the key choice I need to make and the one truth I need to fully believe if I'm ever going to defeat sin and replace it with what is infinitely more satisfying and perfectly joy-inducing. "P" ended up representing the word, "Prefer" ...referring to a change in what I PREFER in my daily life and choices, because what each of us prefers really gets to the source of what sin really is and why it keeps us from the life God wants to give us.

What do you prefer over all other things in your life? What's the thing you most want to spend your time on? Or perhaps, who do you want to be with the most? What are you willing to sacrifice everything else for so that you can have it or pursue it?

John Piper has developed a really great definition of sin and it has to do with this idea of what we prefer in life. He says this:

"God's law demanded, 'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might' (Deuteronomy 6:5).

But we have all loved other things more. This is what sin is – dishonoring God by preferring other things over him, and acting on those preferences. Therefore, the Bible says, ‘All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God’ (Romans 3:23). We glorify what we enjoy most. And it isn’t God.”

To say it again: sin is “**dishonoring God by preferring other things over him, and acting on those preferences.**” I think that’s a pretty profound definition and really gets to the core of what sin is and why it matters to God. It also gives us a clue as to what needs to change in order to defeat sin in our lives.

So let’s start walking through this acrostic. And just so you know, I’ll have a copy of it, with Scripture references, for each of you as you leave today, so just relax and absorb it as we talk through it together.

II. PREFER GOD ABOVE ALL (Deuteronomy 5:7; Psalm 37:4; Psalm 73:25-26)

This is the central, underlying key to walking through life with God: learning to prefer him above all other things and delight ourselves in him in everything we do. Not throwing out every other fun thing we enjoy in life, but preferring God above all those things and making the pursuit of and fellowship with him a part of every activity we participate in.

THE COMMAND:

Deuteronomy 5:7

You shall have no other gods before Me.

THE POSITIVE VERSION OF THE COMMAND:

Deuteronomy 6:5

You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

I think we’re all pretty familiar with the concept of idols...false gods that we put our hope and trust in...and God’s intention is that we don’t let any of these counterfeit gods take his place in our hearts. Timothy Keller, in his book *Counterfeit Gods*, does a great job helping us understand idols and identify what we may be worshiping in our own lives. In answer to the question, “What is an

idol?," he says this: "It is anything more important to you than God, anything that absorbs your heart and imagination more than God, anything you seek to give you what only God can give."

Mr. Keller goes on to say, "A counterfeit god is anything so central and essential to your life that, should you lose it, your life would feel hardly worth living. An idol has such a controlling position in your heart that you can spend most of your passion and energy, your emotional and financial resources, on it without a second thought. It can be family and children, or career and making money, or achievement and critical acclaim, or saving "face" and social standing. It can be a romantic relationship, peer approval, competence and skill, secure and comfortable circumstances, your beauty or your brains, a great political or social cause, your morality or virtue, or even success in Christian ministry...An idol is whatever you look at and say, in your heart of hearts, 'If I have that, then I'll feel my life has meaning, then I'll know I have value, then I'll feel significant and secure.' There are many ways to describe that kind of relationship to something, but perhaps the best one is *worship*."

Psalm 37:4

***Delight yourself in the Lord;
And He will give you the desires of your heart.***

Psalm 73:25-26

25 Whom have I in heaven but You? And besides You, I desire nothing on earth.
26 My flesh and my heart may fail, But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

Prefer God and REACH out for him continuously through prayer, study of his Word, and learning to walk by the Spirit. "Glorify God and enjoy him forever."

Cautionary statement about idolatry: Something is not an idol just because you enjoy it. God has given us many blessing and gifts to enjoy guilt-free. However, when something that might even be good in itself gets so elevated in your life that you're willing to compromise your relationship with God and his priorities and values for it, it has become an idol and needs to be dethroned.

III. RELINQUISH YOUR SIN (1 John 1:5-9; Colossians 3:5-9; Ephesians 4:17-22)

This is putting off your old self. When pockets of sin come to light in your life or when you find your preferences are for anything but God, simply admit it to Him, ask him to root it out, and then turn away from it back to God. Don't let anything hinder your continuous fellowship with God. Deal with sin whenever it crops up. Relinquish it...release your grip...let it go.

1 John 1:8-9

8 If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Colossians 3:5-9

5 Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. 6 For it is because of these things that the wrath of God will come upon the sons of disobedience, 7 and in them you also once walked, when you were living in them. 8 But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth. 9 Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices,

Ephesians 4:17-22

17 So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, 18 being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; 19 and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness. 20 But you did not learn Christ in this way, 21 if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus, 22 that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit,

Take off your old self repeatedly...allow God's light to shine into your deepest core and when it uncovers darkness, confess it and deal with it right then and

there. Then enjoy the blessing and fruits of continuous fellowship with God. Replace the counterfeit with the real thing!

IV. ENJOY THE FULL PRESENCE OF GOD (Psalm 16:11; Psalm 27:4-6; Psalm 73:28; Ephesians 3:14-19)

What an amazing possibility for each of us: to be able to enjoy the full presence of God! What could possibly be better?!

Psalm 16:11

***You will make known to me the path of life;
In Your presence is fullness of joy;
In Your right hand there are pleasures forever.***

Psalm 27:4-6

4 One thing I have asked from the Lord, that I shall seek: That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, To behold the beauty of the Lord And to meditate in His temple. 5 For in the day of trouble He will conceal me in His tabernacle; In the secret place of His tent He will hide me; He will lift me up on a rock. 6 And now my head will be lifted up above my enemies around me, And I will offer in His tent sacrifices with shouts of joy; I will sing, yes, I will sing praises to the Lord.

Psalm 73:28

But as for me, the nearness of God is my good; I have made the Lord God my refuge, That I may tell of all Your works.

THE DIVINE SEQUENCE

Ephesians 3:14-19

14 For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, 15 from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, 16 that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, 19 and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.

Let's not miss out on the incredible opportunity and gift of being filled up to all the fullness of God! Learn to enjoy God and be aware of his constant presence with you. Look and listen for his communications to you. Be a man or a woman after God's own heart. The promise of his fullness awaits!

V. ABSORB WHO YOU ARE (2 Corinthians 5:17; Colossians 3:1-4,12a; 1 John 3:1-2; Ephesians 2:10,19-22)

You are not who you used to be if you're in Christ! Meditate on and believe with all your heart the unalterable fact that in Christ you are a new creation...a child of the King called to live with all the rights and privileges and power of the royal family!

2 Corinthians 5:17

Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.

Colossians 3:1-4

1 Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. 3 For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.

Your life is not in the dead and destructive temptations and counterfeits the world has to offer. Your life is in Christ!

Colossians 3:12

So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved,...

1 John 3:1-2

1 See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. 2 Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is.

Believe and absorb who you now are and learn to live in that new reality along with your brothers and sisters in Christ, becoming together the people of the Presence of God.

VI. CHOOSE TO LIVE YOUR NEW SELF (Ephesians 4:23-32; Colossians 3:10-16; 2 Corinthians 5:20-21; Romans 8:12-17; Galatians 5:22-25)

By the power of the Spirit living within you, choose the ways of the new self. It's a moment by moment choice that we each have to make and can make by the power of the Spirit.

Ephesians 4:23-24

23 and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, 24 and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.

Colossians 3:12-16

12 So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; 13 bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. 14 Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. 15 Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful. 16 Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

Romans 8:12-14

12 So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh — 13 for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live. 14 For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

Galatians 5:22-25

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. 24

Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 25 If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.

By the Spirit, choose to live your new self...walk out in power and new life!

VII. HAND ALL THE GLORY TO GOD (Colossians 3:17; Ephesians 3:20-21; Psalm 73:28c; 1 Peter 2:9-10)

And finally, don't ever take credit for what God's doing in and through you. Remain in humility, gratefully praising him for his presence and power in your life. In whatever you do, glorify him continuously.

Colossians 3:17

Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.

Ephesians 3:20-21

20 Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, 21 to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.

Psalm 73:28

***But as for me, the nearness of God is my good;
I have made the Lord God my refuge,
That I may tell of all Your works.***

Give constant glory and thanks to God as his power works within you, and live a life that preaches the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

VIII. CONCLUSION

This, my friends, is what it looks like to live life as God intended...a preaching life, you might say, where we walk into the good works he's prepared for us and sing the praises of him who called us out of darkness...**a life where we prefer God above all else and constantly reach out for him**, thereby finding the path of life, fullness of joy in his presence and pleasures forever at his right hand. May the

truths contained in these Scriptures and in this simple acrostic be used daily by God in each of our lives to guide us into the purpose he has for each of us...the life transformation and good works that are waiting for each true believer who is ready to walk into them.

And don't ever forget the REACH in PREACH. Without constant and continual prayer you'll get nowhere. Let me close today with a quote from Samuel Chadwick to nail this final truth about prayer home:

“The one concern of the devil is to keep the saints from prayer. He fears nothing from prayerless studies, prayerless work, prayerless religion. He laughs at our toil, mocks at our wisdom, but trembles when we pray...Prayer turns ordinary mortals into men of power...It brings fire. It brings rain. It brings life. It brings God. There is now power like that of prevailing prayer.”

Your life can only preach effectively if you reach continually.

P Prefer God Above All (*Deuteronomy 5:7; Psalm 37:4; Psalm 73:25-26*)

R Relinquish Your Sin (*1 John 1:5-9; Colossians 3:5-9; Ephesians 4:17-22*)

E Enjoy the Full Presence of God (*Psalm 16:11; Psalm 27:4-6; Psalm 73:28; Eph. 3:14-19*)

A Absorb Who You Are (*2 Cor. 5:17; Colossians 3:1-4,12a; 1 John 3:1-2; Eph. 2:10,19-22*)

C Choose to Live Your New Self (*Eph. 4:23-32; Col. 3:10-16; 2 Cor. 5:20-21; Rom 8:12-17*)

H Hand All the Glory to God (*Colossians 3:17; Eph. 3:20-21; Psalm 73:28c; 1 Peter 2:9-10*)