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## THE PROBLEM IN THE SIMULATOR 1 Thessalonians 2:4-6

East Bakersfield High School, my high school alma mater, had a student newspaper that came out weekly during the school year called *The Kernal*. I never understood why. They don't have it anymore, the school axed the program about 3 years ago, due to lack of funding and student interest. But back in the day each week one article would be a profile of an "outstanding senior." For no reason I can discern I was selected one week to be the subject. They asked a number of questions about your interests, highlights of your high school years, future plans, and who your friends were. I named several people who were my best friends and then said, "and all the guys on the baseball team." When the article was printed it said, "all the guys on the basketball team" instead of the baseball team. Our school's basketball team lost only 1 game in my last 2 years of school, was undefeated my senior year and was ranked number 1 in the state. But I didn't play basketball. I knew the guys on the team, but with one exception they weren't my best friends, and they would have thought it ridiculous for me to claim them as close friends. And what would my buddies on the baseball team think? I was closer to guys on the basketball team that I wasn't even a part of than I was with my teammates? When I saw the article it bothered me. I felt the mistake made me look silly, at least in the eyes of some. Unfortunately, I couldn't fix it.

The truth is that probably hardly anybody read that article. I never read them unless they happened to be about one of my good friends, and sometimes not even then. So it was likely no one even noticed the mistake, and certainly no one cared. Not a soul ever said anything about it. Nevertheless, it bothered me. If you can believe this, it still rankles a little to this day. It doesn't cause me huge angst, but I remember it. Why is that? What is at the heart of that annoyance? I don't like looking bad or dumb or ridiculous to other people. I care what other people think of me. And you care what other people think of you, too. So what? Actually that's a bigger deal than you might think, and we hopefully will see that as we consider some words from 1 Thessalonians 2:4-6 today.

### PAUL AND FRIENDS REFUSED TO PLAY TO THE CROWD

There are two human traits that are identified as problems in these verses, one we will consider this week, and one next week. The one we will look at today is highlighted in two statements in these verses. Verse 4 says Paul and his colleagues "were not trying to please people" then in verse 6 he says they "were not looking

for praise from people.” Those statements highlight the common desire to please people and get praise from others.

Why do you suppose they specifically brought up those issues? I believe it was because that’s what people often do. They were trying to win people to their way of thinking. One of the most common ways to do that is to try to please people, to give them what they want to hear. Sometimes when Laurie and I are thinking of making a significant purchase we have experienced this. When the sales person asks what we do and we tell them I am a pastor it is amazing how quickly they become religious. I’d love to think that’s a matter of one believer connecting with another, but all too often it is quickly apparent that it is just an act. They apparently don’t realize as a pastor you are bound to have a pretty good phony detector.

In the case of Paul and his friends they had an even stronger motivation, and that was self-protection. They had already suffered repeatedly for their faith and it would be tempting to try to avoid having a repeat because you’ve gotten people ticked off at you again.

We all understand and feel the pull of the desire to try to make other people happy and to get praise from others. We want approval and notice from others. How common are these desires? All I need to do is ask how many of you see yourselves as something of a people pleaser. Yeah, that’s pretty much all of us. In fact, in her book, *Flying French Fries*, counselor and psychologist Dr. Rowena Shaw said that 99% of the people she meets are people pleasers.

How does it feel to you if someone is upset or mad at you? Do you find yourself dwelling on it and being offended by the very fact that someone is mad at you, do you dream about ways to prove them wrong or get back at them or to make them like you more? Do you ever find you are bending yourself into a pretzel shape just to stop them being upset with you or do you find yourself doing anything you can to avert a possible conflict? Elephant in the room? What elephant? I don’t see an elephant in the room.

It is the most human thing in the world to want people to like us. That’s why when a female acquaintance shows up with an atrocious new hairdo and says, “How do you like my hair?” most of us try to avoid saying, “Well, it’s different. Did you have your gardener do it with his hedge clippers or was your stylist just having a bad day?” We say we don’t want the person to feel bad, and that certainly is part of the equation. But another big part is we don’t want to offend them and have them get mad at us.

We want to be liked, and we are desperate to be included. In his essay *The Inner Ring* C. S. Lewis asserted that everywhere we go, in every group of humans we perceive there to be an Inner Ring, a group we long to be part of. He says, “I believe that in all men’s lives at certain periods, and in many men’s lives at all periods between infancy and extreme old age, one of the most dominant elements is the desire to be inside the local Ring and the terror of being left outside.” Furthermore he says “this desire is one of the great mainsprings of human action.” If we are driven by that desire we will be desperate to get those inside the “Ring” to like us.

How much do we like notice and praise? Our thirst for it cannot be slaked. In 2011 a team of psychologists from UCLA analyzed the values of characters in popular television shows over the last 40 years and their effects particularly on pre-teens. The results were startling. They concluded that the number one value in that group is now “fame.” The most important thing is to be famous if at all possible. One of the researchers said, “I was shocked, especially by the dramatic changes in the last 10 years. I thought fame would be important, but did not expect this drastic an increase or such a dramatic decrease in other values.” Another said the rise of the desire for fame may be one influence in the documented rise of narcissism in our culture.

Paul and his friends refused to be controlled by those very human desires. They chose to obey God and accept the consequences, whatever they turned out to be.

#### GOD WANTS US TO FOLLOW THEIR EXAMPLE

There is a startling verse in James that we need to come to grips with. It is James 4:4. “You adulterous people, don’t you know that friendship with the world means enmity against God? Therefore, anyone who chooses to be a friend with the world becomes an enemy of God.”

Now there’s a verse that no one claims as their life verse. It starts with calling the readers “adulterous people.” Hey, James, haven’t you ever heard about building affinity with your readers? Slapping people in the face by calling them adulterous isn’t exactly in the category of winning friends and influencing people. Besides, we aren’t unfaithful to our spouses. James answers, “You have been unfaithful to God, and that’s much worse even than marital unfaithfulness.” But I don’t think I’ve been unfaithful to God. I don’t worship false gods. How dare you accuse me of being unfaithful to God?

James claims that our pathetic need to get other people to like us and to have other people pat us on the back causes us to choose pleasing them over obeying God, all too often. That unfaithfulness makes us as bad as the scum ball husband who has multiple affairs with other women. What would happen to a man in the church who was living like that and was unrepentant? He would be confronted and disciplined. James says we can be God's friend or we can be the world's friend, we can't be both. If we aren't faithful to God we are his enemy!

Imagine a football player who started his NFL career on one of the Super Bowl teams. He has lots of friends on that team and has great affinity with them. But at this point in his career he became a free agent and signed with a different team. As it turns out his new team is now also in the Super Bowl playing against his former team. Can he play in that game in such a way that he keeps everybody on both teams happy? No, he must choose. He can be friendly with friends on both teams, but he must play his best for his new team regardless of how it affects his other team. He must hit them if the play calls for it, he must do his best to defeat them. He may not like it, but that player he has to choose his new team and play to win. God warns us in that passage that we have to choose. Will we be on God's team or the world's? The choice is that stark.

The Bible is full of examples of people faced with that choice and making the right one. As always the chief and best example is Jesus. In Matthew 15:3-9 Jesus confronted the Pharisees with their hypocrisy. He pointed out ways they didn't live by their own rules, called them hypocrites and quoted Isaiah saying their hearts were far from God. Those are brutally offensive things to say to people who were regarded as the most devout in all of Israel. In verse 12 here's what happened, "The disciples came to him and asked, 'Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this?'" The disciples were wincing as Jesus fired off verbal shot after verbal shot and were thinking, "Sheesh, Master, these guys are our leaders. Everybody respects them. We don't want to get on their bad side. Can't you tone it down?"

These were the most intelligent and devout people in a very religious nation and Jesus was calling them hypocrites to their faces. Do you know how he responded to the disciples and their concern about offending the Pharisees? In verse 14 he said, "Leave them; they are blind guides. If the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a pit." Well don't sugarcoat it, Jesus. Why don't you tell us what you really think? On other occasions Jesus called the elite of his culture a brood of vipers and whitewashed tombs. But he only meant it in the best possible way. He clearly was not trying to please people.

One of my favorite examples of Jesus' lack of concern with what people might think is in John 6. In the first part of the chapter Jesus miraculously fed thousands of people with a couple of fish tacos from Rubio's. This made him wildly popular. Free food. Who doesn't want that? In a culture where much of life was consumed with just getting enough to eat for one more day, this was a dream come true. They were thinking they could just follow Jesus around and have him feed them every day. What a great plan. The crowds were becoming almost unmanageable. In verse 26 Jesus revealed he knew exactly what the people wanted. They weren't thirsting after truth and righteousness. They wanted food. "Very truly I tell you, you are looking for me not because you saw the signs I performed, but because you ate the loaves and had your fill."

He had the perfect opportunity there to give his Messiah campaign a huge boost. People were thrilled with this free food ministry. Hey even if it was fish tacos every day it was free and plentiful, know what I mean? Beats starving by a long shot. It also beats working your rear end off just to survive. Just keep the good stuff coming and those people would follow him anywhere. Jesus totally blew the opportunity he had there. In verse 53 he said, "Very truly I tell you unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you." That's just awful. Laurie and I saw a TV commercial for some pharmaceutical drug that featured a little character that was a walking intestine with a face. It was just laughably bad. I said, "I can't believe some advertising company came up with that and got paid for it." As bad as it was it sure beats, "Eat my flesh and drink my blood." What a motto for the Messiah campaign. Ronald Reagan had, "Let's Make American Great Again," Barack Obama had "Yes We Can," and Jesus had "Eat my flesh and drink my blood." Wow. To make matters worse Jesus repeated the statement twice more just to make sure we got it.

Jesus wasn't concerned with pleasing people, with trying to make them like him and praise him. The message we should take from his example isn't "go out there and be verbally brutal and offensive." Love is to be the motive in everything we do. When we speak we are to do it lovingly. But if we are to follow Jesus, if we are to be friends with God, then we must stop fearing what people might think.

## APPLICATION

### WHY IS SEEKING APPROVAL A BAD THING?

#### *It leads to compromise*

In this passage we can see the danger. If Paul were trying to please people or win their praise he would never have faithfully proclaimed a gospel that was offensive

to some. That's what our need for the approval of others does to us. It warps our priorities and puts the opinions of some people in God's place.

In the early years of our ministry the leadership team of our church considered making a change. We were renting the auditorium of a school to have our services in and we were looking at another location to rent. We weren't being forced to move, but there was a concern that we might not be allowed to keep renting the facility we were in. A consensus formed about moving to a particular location. It seemed like a logical decision, but as I considered it and prayed about it I became uneasy about it. The more I thought about it the more I had misgivings, but not for any specific reason. It just felt to me like it was not going to be a good thing. Unfortunately all the other leaders were clearly in favor. I thought it would be dumb to say, "I just don't think this is a good idea" when I couldn't explain any reason why. The old *Star Wars* "I have a bad feeling about this" argument was pretty weak. So I didn't say anything. I didn't say anything because I feared how I would look to the other leaders. We made the decision and it turned out to be bad news. It helped our church go into a two year long funk before we were able to rectify the situation.

That wasn't a moral compromise, but it was a compromise of what I knew was best. Others have made far worse compromises simply because they feared how they might look. That happens when we choose friendship with the world over friendship with God.

### ***It can damage relationships***

You might think an effort to please people would make for better relationships since if I'm trying to please someone I'm trying to make them happy. In one sense that's true, but there's an underlying issue that can result in relational damage. When I am trying to make someone else happy or win approval or praise for myself I'm focusing on me. So I am not really loving the other person.

Pastor and author John Ortberg says, "To truly care for people requires not caring too much about their approval or disapproval." The obvious reality is if I am focused on the approval of others as a way of shoring up my sense of my own worth what I am not doing is loving them!

### ***It limits us***

What will people think? That question lurks in our minds continually. Has there ever been something that you kind of wanted to do, but never did because you were afraid of how you might look?

Years ago in our other church I led the Bible study for our college age group. At one time some of the college guys, including my son, came up with the idea of forming an ice hockey team. Several of them had played quite a bit of hockey so they thought this would be fun. I thought it was a great idea. I figured it would be a good bonding tool for the group, thinking that even us non-combatants would go and cheer them on in their games. And then they came up with a terrible idea. A couple of them, including my son, suggested that I should play on this proposed team. I thought they were joking. I made a few jokes about it and laughed. Then they insisted they were serious. I had several problems with the idea. I hadn't played hockey for several years at that point so whatever meager skills I had were rusty at best. Second, I was always a terrible hockey player to begin with. But the biggest issue was I was 25 to 30 years older than most of the guys. I not only was old enough to be their father, I *was* the father of one of them. How could an old guy like me even hope to keep up with kids who were less than half his age?

When I realized they were serious I was initially gracious about it but wanted no part of it. They kept pushing and made me think about my reasoning. One part of my hesitance was legitimate. I figured I was going to get myself killed. Well, not literally killed, but the odds of injury were pretty high. But as I looked at it objectively I realized that wasn't the thing that was stopping me. I was afraid of embarrassing myself. If I tried to play with those guys I was going to look really bad. It would be humiliating, and I knew it. In other words, I was afraid of how I would look to other people. They may have heard me say I was a crummy hockey player, but if I played with those guys they'd see the ugly truth. At least in my earlier years I had been bad, but I was playing with guys somewhat near my age. Now I wouldn't just be bad, I'd be laughably bad.

There came a point at which I realized that the primary thing stopping me was fear of what people would think. I decided that was not a good reason for refusing to play. So I warned the guys that I was going to be awful and gave them one last chance to rethink their invitation to play. They insisted they didn't care. So I pulled out some of my old equipment and played. And I was terrible. But I had the precious opportunity for the only time in my life to be a teammate of my own son, and I had a blast. And I suffered no significant injuries.

Whether I played hockey or not is of no significance. But what might we fail to do because we feared we might look bad, or feared that people might reject us? I suspect every single one of us has probably missed an opportunity to love others, to step out in faith, to be used by God in some way because we were afraid of what

people might think. I am not going to sing a solo today because I don't think you'd like it. In that case that's a good thing. But all too often we can be limited by this desire to get approval or be applauded.

Being concerned about what people might think is a prison. As long as we are letting that rule in our lives we will never really be able to live freely. We can never be free to be the people God wants us to be. What would you be, what would you do if you had no concern whatsoever with what people would think? I suspect most of us would be rather different if we lived that way.

### *It causes stress*

When we pursue the approval and applause of others we live our lives on the stage. Everything we do is a performance played out before the audience that is all around us. We can never let our guard down, for if we do we might make some mistake that will be seen by all. We might fail, and failure is a total disaster.

About 12 or 13 years ago I had an interesting opportunity. A friend who was an F-18 pilot with the Marines invited me and a couple of other guys to go down to Miramar and use the F-18 simulator that they train the pilots on. He took us to a building on the base and strapped me into the pilot's seat. I was sitting in an actual F-18 cockpit, only there was no airplane, just a dark room. Projected ahead of me was what I would see as I "flew" the plane. I was surrounded by a bewildering array of instruments and controls for the canopy, the parking brake, the nose wheel, the throttles, flaps, the stick, weapons trigger, and so. Over the head phones I heard the instruction to start the engines, then lower the canopy. Release the brake, give a little throttle, steer the plane onto the runway. Cleared to take off, brake on, give it military power, then release the brake. The plane rolls down the runway gathering speed at a dizzying pace, rotate, and off we go! And I was sweating like a pig. It was all happening so fast and I was nervous. Why? If I screwed up and crashed I wasn't going to die. No one was going to be hurt and I wasn't going to destroy a hideously expensive aircraft no matter what I did. If I did something dumb only my two friends and the simulator operator would know it. I wanted to look good. I wanted to show I could've been a fighter pilot. I wanted to look good and impress observers. And my desire not to look bad before even a few people created amazing stress.

My point here is that living for the approval and applause of other people is not a free and joyful way to live. It is stressful, fearful and saps the joy right out of life. I enjoyed my little adventure in the simulator, but to this day I wish I could have



been calmer about the whole thing and just enjoyed it more. I sure don't want to come to the end of my life and say the same thing about my whole life.

### HOW CAN WE BREAK THE HABIT OF SEEKING APPROVAL?

I have made the point before that the central question of the book of Romans is "how can we be righteous?" The initial reaction modern people have is "who cares?" That's irrelevant to them. But nothing could be more relevant, because all of us were created with an unquenchable thirst for righteousness, every single human. It's a big problem that we don't understand what that need is. We mistake it for other things. To be righteous is to be approved, to be deemed worthy. We all have the persistent idea that we get that approval from other people. That's why pleasing people, gaining their approval and their praise, is like a life and death battle for us. We can hardly bear to live if we don't feel approved.

I have a habit I cannot seem to break. It is the habit of drinking, especially water. There has not been a single day in all my years when I have not been controlled by this habit. I get thirsty and I must drink. I can't help myself. I must do it many times every day. Sometimes I drink enough that I don't think I'll ever need to drink anything again. But hours later I am thirsty again. That's because my body must have fluid to function. Without it my body dies. So drinking is an unbreakable, persistent, ever demanding habit.

I have another thirst. It is the thirst for righteousness, for approval. We all do. It is as persistent as our body's thirst for fluids. Our souls thirst for righteousness, for approval, *and without it our souls die*. That's why you occasionally read stories of people whose lives have been utterly decimated by the lack of affirmation. The whole lack of esteem thing is really about this need. *So the pursuit of approval is a habit you will never break*. You can grit your teeth and tell yourself you don't care all you want, and it will be just as effective as telling yourself you don't need water. Which is to say it will never work. Are we doomed then to live with its distortion of life, the stress, the damaged relationships, the fear, the compromises, the limitations it forces on us? No, there is freedom, and here is how we gain it.

### LIVE IN GOD'S APPROVAL

Observe in our passage that Paul says, "we speak as **those approved by God** to be entrusted with the gospel." That is the key to Paul's freedom. He was approved by God. Romans 3:21-22 says, "But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been made known to which the law and the prophets testify. This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe." Paul had lived his whole life clear and correct about the fact that the necessary foundation of a life, of

emotional and spiritual health is God's approval. But he had tried all his life to earn it by doing all the right things especially religiously. He convinced himself he was succeeding only to find he was utterly wrong. He had, in fact, become an enemy of God. Then he found real approval from God through Jesus Christ. There is an approval that comes from God. That is the approval we need most, and it comes not by being smarter, more religious, morally superior, better looking or more talented or accomplished. It comes by putting faith in Jesus Christ. There is nothing more we can do to gain this approval than just put faith in him. In fact, any attempt to gain approval by any other method actually draw us away from the approval, the righteousness God gives us by his grace through Jesus.

Think of the story from Jesus' life that is recorded in John 4. Jesus and his disciples go to a town in Samaria. There is intense racial and religious prejudice and hatred between Jews and Samaritans. They mixed as well as Arabs and Israelis today. The disciples go to a local fast food restaurant to get some food, but Jesus hangs at the local well. There he encounters a Samaritan woman who shows up in the middle of the day to get some water. This lady is there by herself because the other women will have nothing to do with her. They hate her. She's a homewrecker. She'll sleep anything that has human DNA with a Y chromosome. Jesus asks her for some water and she's shocked that he would even talk to her. Then Jesus drops a bomb. He tells her he can give her water, but not just any water. He can give living water. In John 4:14 he says, "whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst."

Jesus was telling the woman that he knew there was a thirst in her that was not physical, it was spiritual. Her soul thirsted for something. Her soul thirsted for righteousness and all that comes with that. Jesus claimed he could give her water that would cause her to never thirst again. He gives the approval that can satisfy our souls so we never thirst again. We never need the approval or acclaim of others. It comes by believing that in Jesus we are forgiven, washed, clean, and have become exactly what God wants. When he sees us he sees the perfection, the righteousness of Jesus Christ. It's like we're wearing a righteousness cloak so that's all God sees. We are totally loved and approved.

How important is that? About a year ago Disney came out with a new movie version of the Cinderella story. Laurie had to see it. I'm not sure why because it was the same story we watched over and over when our daughter was little and Laurie loved when she was a kid. But we watched it and I was reminded what a profound theological story it is. Life was miserable for Cinderella. She was despised and oppressed. She lived a life of gloom, hardship, rejection and

hopelessness. Then a powerful, miraculous thing happens. It took a supernatural event, but she is able to go to the ball and there she meets the handsome prince. He loves her, and though there are some obstacles his love wins through. She was undeserving, dirty, worthless in the eyes of many, maybe all, but the prince loved her, and that was all that mattered. Did it matter that others might think she was nothing more than a lowly maid? Did it matter that her step mother and step sisters despised her? That did not matter at all. The handsome prince loved her, and nothing else counted.

We are Cinderella. We are the despised, the undeserving, the dirty, the oppressed, the hopeless. But something powerful, something miraculous has happened. The Prince of Peace, the Lord of all, has declared that he loves us and that we are beautiful in his sight. We are approved, loved. Nothing else matters. This is the water that slakes the thirst of our souls. It is the answer to our deepest need.

The key to breaking our habit of pathetically seeking the approval and praise of people is to continually drink of Jesus. Keep drinking the living water that he gives. That water is God's approval, the righteousness that comes through faith in Jesus Christ. It is going back to the fundamental truth that is the basis of life for us, that God loves us, accepts us, counts us worthy and infinitely valuable. So who cares what others think?

### LIVE TO PLEASE GOD

Notice that Paul says, "we were not trying to please people, but God." The audience for Paul's life was God. Paul didn't have to perform to get God's approval, he already had it. He told us that. He knew he was approved by God. So why is he trying to please God and have God be his audience? It's because he knew someone was going to be the audience for his life. We all have the sense that we are being evaluated. Someone is watching. When God is your audience you know that what you will get is approval, because it has already been given.

That approval makes us want to do everything we can to live up to the incredible gift that has already been given to us. Years ago I went to a store one day and bought an outfit for Laurie. As I was checking out the girl at the counter asked if this was for my wife's birthday. I said no. She said, "Is it in anniversary present?" I said no. She said, "Oh, so you and your wife had a fight?" I laughed and said, "No, there's no special occasion. It's just that my wife is amazing. I can't believe how much she loves me. I think I'm the luckiest man alive to be married to her, and I just want to do something to remind her how special she is and how blessed I am to

be married to her.” She sighed, turned to her co-worker and said, “Why are the good ones always taken?”

My point here is that in buying that gift I wasn't doing it in order to get Laurie to love me. I was doing it because she loves so much already, and I simply wanted her to know how grateful I am for that. That's how and why we live to please God. It's not to earn something from him or to appease him or to gain his approval. We already have that. It is to respond to his approval by letting him know how thankful we are.

**You need approval.** You will try to get it. You will either live with the warping stress of trying to earn it from some source that has impossible requirements that you must meet (which is what the opinions of others always amount to), or you gain it from one who gives it to you by love and grace. In the latter case you have a desire to please them not to earn something, but because you are so happy and grateful.

#### DO SOMETHING BIG

Notice that Paul says they were “entrusted with the gospel.” The word “entrusted” tells us a lot about how Paul thought about that. You “entrust” people with things that are valuable and important. Laurie doesn't “entrust” me with the trash when it's time to take it to the garbage bin.

What can help us resist the habit of being dominated by our thirst for approval is to have something far more important to do. If we are entrusted with a much bigger role in life then it will overshadow that annoying habit. Listen to Paul's words in Ephesians 3:7-9. “By God's grace and mighty power, I have been given the privilege of serving him by spreading this Good News. Though I am the least deserving of all God's people, he graciously gave me the privilege of telling the Gentiles about the endless treasures available to them in Christ. I was chosen to explain to everyone this mysterious plan that God, the Creator of all things, had kept secret from the beginning.” Paul was dumbfounded by the privilege and unfathomably significant task that had been handed to him. It was such a high calling that he could not imagine ever letting any lesser pursuit interfering with it.

Imagine that the person you love most in the world is seriously ill, in need of a vital organ transplant. Without this transplant his beloved person will die. To your great relief, a match is found. The organ is being flown in and you are assigned the task of going to the airport to pick up the organ and delivering it to the hospital. So you go, pick up the sealed case that holds the organ and head toward the hospital.

While you are on the way a good friend calls and says, “Hey, all of us are getting together to watch the Super Bowl game. We have lots of food. Why don’t you come on over? The game is starting in 5 minutes.” Are you tempted to say, “Hey, that sounds wonderful. I’m on my way”? Do you figure you can deliver that organ any time? Maybe you’ll go as soon as the game is over. Or if it’s a blowout maybe even a little sooner. No way. You’ve been entrusted with the life of the person you love the most. Nothing will interfere with your task, for nothing could be as important.

Driving in today Laurie and I heard a song on the radio by Casting Crowns titled *Thrive*. It has a great line that says, "We know that we were made for more than ordinary lives." That's true. We are intended for something more important and more spectacular. We are here to lift up the name of Jesus Christ, the Lord of all that exists. This is huge.

That’s what can help us. 1 Peter 2:9 says we have been called out of darkness into God’s marvelous light to declare the praises of the one who called us. We have been entrusted with the task of making him known by our priorities, our actions, our values. Nothing is more important. As we focus on this enormously important task surely we will not sacrifice it for the lesser pursuit of pleasing people.