

Series: Grace Forward

Sermon #1: Like Christ in ALL of Life

1 Kings 18:1-47; 19:1-21

Dr. Matt Cassidy --- January 3, 2021

Well, Happy New Year, Grace! Isn't it just great to say that? I'm going to say that until June 12th. Happy New Year! A turn of the calendar has never felt so sweet, right? And the band, right? That was like "Footloose." Was that not that first song? That was a lot of fun. And I know you guys at home—I don't know if you know this, but because you're tuning in, we can see you, and we saw you dancing. And that's okay. We wish we would have done that too. But if we play that song again, I'm going to get footloose. That's good.

Wrap-up of 2020 and Hope for 2021

Honestly, I'm putting too much hope in this new year. It's good to be in a different calendar date. I know there's been so many people in my life and probably in yours as well that have suffered. It's not been a good experience in 2020. So many people that I know of have passed away: family members and friends, and even pets, it seems like. There's so much sorrow that we've experienced together and individually.

But also, it has been a year where, if we choose, we could thrive. And in many ways Grace Covenant Church thrived. We planned almost a year ahead of January 2020 to read through the Bible together, and we got all the things lined up for that, and we decided to do it anyway. And we read collectively, so many of you—we read through the Bible in a year. And that's an awesome feat. And through that time, we studied the Bible together on Sunday mornings. We've never done that—spent a whole year doing a survey. That was beautiful.

And then, in the crazy, unpredictable financial situation the whole world has been in, we hit most all of our numbers. And then for our final month giving, we asked you guys to put Grace first on the top of your list. And so many people did that, that we are there. We're really close to all our financial goals. I want to thank everyone for doing that. That's awesome!

And I tell you that because that's going to give us the ability to slingshot forward to 2021 and the new ways we're going to do ministry in 2021. And when I say "new ways," it's still the

same philosophy of ministry, but it's a new way of applying it. Because I feel like 2021 as a church would be not "seize the day," but "seize the year." I want 2021 to be like seizing the year. This would be something different, like no other year than in the fifty years of the history of our church. The year 2021 is when we get to do what we've been doing well, but really excel in that, exceptionally well.

Grace Forward

In our leadership we've been talking about this for months now. How do we do what we're called to do, to introduce people to the life-changing power of the salvation that comes through Jesus Christ and Him alone, and to help people who are willing to become like Christ in all of life? And so, we've been talking about it. What does Grace forward look like? Grace forward—going forward. And so, for the next four weeks, I want to tell you what that's going to look like. I want to spend four weeks on that. Because when it comes to the ministry here at church, at Grace, everything has changed. Everything's changed. And nothing's changed.

Everything's changed in many respects: in our time and our culture, in our experiences. We're not going back to the way it was a year ago today. Corporations know this, schools know this, retailers know this. They're not going back. And the Church isn't either. It's changed. Everything's changed.

And nothing's changed. The nature of man is still in the image of God, longing and desiring to have a purposeful, intimate relationship with God and have a deep communion with our fellow man. That stays the same. God hasn't changed. The Word of God has not changed. And so, when you build on things that don't change over time in other cultures, you get to be that stabilizing force throughout all kinds of radical circumstantial changes.

And so, while we don't have a new vision for Grace Covenant Church, we just have a new application for it. It's still "Every believer's a minister"—now more than ever. Now better than ever. At Grace Covenant Church, we believe that everyone is a minister here. It's a church that's filled with pastors and ministers. And so, if our vision were (before the time of COVID) to get as many people in this building as possible, and you guys just get busy inviting as many friends as possible to our big events, and then leave it to us—we're the pastors, we're the pros, we'll close those deals—if that were the case, then we'd have to radically change our vision for the church and how things are done. We'd have to change it to "every believer's a minister,"

because that's where this ministry is getting done. It's out there. If a way of keeping score was big events, like how many big events we could have and how it's all about you having these big events and the way we kept score was simple conversions, maybe baptisms, then we would have to radically change the way we kept score and say, *Wait a minute. It's not just that. It's helping people become like Christ in all of life.* "Teaching them to obey all that I have commanded you"—that's what Jesus said.

So, we were already doing these things that God told us to do, and we had biblical values and we had biblical direction, and it was based on the nature of God and the nature of man. So, the good news is everything's changed, everything stays the same. "Grace Forward" just means that we've got to get better at what we're doing. And so, in week three and four coming up, I'm going to tell you how the collective church is going to apply what we've done before, maybe in a whole new way ... maybe add a few things. But that's weeks three and four.

In weeks two and three, I want to talk about the individual part of Grace Covenant Church—you and me—the things that make Grace what it is. Because at Grace every believer is a minister. And what that means, philosophically, for us, when we make decisions, when we do things for ministry, is that we're a bunch of individuals on a team. And it's not like Grace is this giant building that's going around Austin doing stuff. No. At Grace, we think that the church is us all over the place. And so, as our team members are all over the place, we need to individually get in competition shape. When you're going into a competition, you can't maintain that kind of shape on a regular off-season. So, this is like during on-season, playoff shape. We need to do that individually so that it helps the collective good.

Another way of looking at it is, at Grace, we sincerely build our philosophy around the fact that we're a body. We're a body of believers, and each part is absolutely essential. And we talk about Grace Forward in weeks three and four, it is contingent and based on the success of Grace Forward in weeks one and two, which is individuals getting right; individuals being healthy, in competition shape, playing their part, and submitting to their part in the body of Christ. Because this is like "seize the year" for the glory of God. At Grace Covenant Church we can do this and we can do this big.

This week, together, we're going to look at what needs to change. And then next week I'm going to show you **how** you can change. So, you might have gotten an e-mail about bringing

your notepad—what needs to change in your life? And next week I'm going to show you how life change happens.

Grace Forward, Week 1: What to Change

This week—what to change. We're going to look at an Old Testament saint whose name is Elijah. If you want you can turn into your Bibles to 1 Kings 18 and 19. I'm going to go through the story very quickly. You can read it later. But when we look at this passage, I want you to look for these three things.

1. I want you to note how Elijah falls into a state of despair and discouragement.
2. And then I want you to see how God beautifully interrupts Elijah's despair in being an overwhelming, never-ending, reckless pursuer—God's love. Watch how God restores him.
3. And then, finally, I want us to look at how that helps us know how to get into competition shape.

What happens to Elijah to get him into that place, what does God do, and then how does that help us get in shape?

The Setting of Elijah's Story

Here's a summary of what is going on in this story. By the time this is taking place in chapter 19, we're going to find Elijah is broken in every way. He doesn't have moral failure—don't get me wrong—but this is actually on the heels of his greatest ministry conquest. But what has happened to him is that his body is spent, his soul is without hope, and his spirit is such that he has demented views of God. And that's when God shows up.

So, here's the setting of the story. It is during the Divided Kingdom period in the Old Testament, and the northern kingdom is called Israel. And the king and queen of northern Israel are King Ahab, who's just a cowardly guy; and the most wicked female in the Bible, Queen Jezebel. And Ahab and Jezebel have collectively led—because they're king and queen—Israel to Baal idol worship. (Baal is a false god.) And because Israel is participating in idol worship, God has disciplined them. It's in the desert, and God causes them to have a drought. And Israel is still not repenting, so this goes on for three years. And after three years, God says, *Okay, we've got to*

put an end to this. Let's finally have this ultimate challenge of who is the real God; who is deserving of worship.

And this is how it comes out. On Mount Carmel, it is a contest, winner take all, who gets to be the real God. On one side over here are 450 priests of Baal. And on this side—one man—Elijah, representing Yahweh. The contest? They are each to build an altar of sacrifice loaded up with altar wood, and then you pray to Baal or Yahweh, and that god is supposed to light his offering on fire. The loser dies. You play stupid games, you win stupid prizes.

Who goes first? The prophets and priests of Baal. And they pray to their god and they dance and do their things; they do whatever they can to get Baal to light his own fire, and nothing happens.

Then it's Elijah's turn. He's kind of a trash talker. He covers his bonfire sticks in water. He soaks them and saturates them. He whispers a quiet prayer to Yahweh, and then out of the sky flames light and torch this fire and burn the altar and everything. Message received: Yahweh is the only true God.

And the people realize what's happening and they repent. Time to pay up. Four hundred and fifty priests are killed because they led the people away. And then, out of nowhere, across the horizon, a small cloud about the size of a man's fist is seen. And then it grows and it becomes a storm, and the drought is over. The people repent and Yahweh has won. He has given them rain back. Great story, right?

1 Kings 19:2

Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, "So may the gods do to me and even more, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time."

Queen Jezebel, the most wicked female in the Bible, is not impressed with this, and she didn't like losing 450 of her priests. She says this in chapter 19, verse 2: "And Jezebel sent message to Elijah, saying, 'So may the gods do to me even more if I do not make your life as the life as one them [these priest] by tomorrow at this time.'"

A Prophet in Despair

Elijah's response to this death threat by the queen? He's afraid. He's afraid for his life. He runs sixteen miles to Jezreel. He outruns a chariot to get there. And that's not far enough. He keeps running.

1 Kings 19:3

Elijah was afraid and ran for his life. When he came to Beersheba in Judah, he left his servant there.

In verses 3 and 4, it says, "Elijah was afraid and ran for his life. And when he came to Beersheba,"—that's a hundred miles south of Jezreel in Judah—"he left his servant there." That's not far enough. He leaves his servant in Beersheba, which is kind of this desert no-man's land—I mean, it's not a pretty place. It's a long way from Queen Jezebel, is the point.

1 Kings 19:4

But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness. He came to a juniper tree, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. "I have had enough, Yahweh," he said. "Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors."

But he leaves him and still goes a day's journey. It says, "... while he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness. He came to a juniper tree, sat down underneath it and prayed that he might die. 'I have had enough, Yahweh,' he said. 'Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors.'"

Wow. What happened? What happened to this hero, this saint, Elijah, this great victor? Look at him. His head is between his knees, lying underneath this juniper tree, and he's just weeping bitterly asking God to just take his life—it would be better if he didn't live.

Analysis of Disillusionment

I want us to look at this for a lot of different reasons. I want us to take a close look at this because I know many of you have been here a while. You've been under that juniper tree. And

those who haven't, you will be. I have a time share there. They know me there. And if we understand how he got there and what God does with this, it's going to help us in our spiritual life together.

1. Elijah Has Just Experienced a Spiritual High

But let's look at how he got there. The first factor is the spiritual life that's going on in Elijah. Elijah is coming off the greatest victory in his spiritual career. And with every victory there's usually an equal and opposite trough. It just comes. With every high, there's a low. And when a person has a spiritual high moment, they are exceptionally vulnerable to despair and discouragement and depression. And I hope he knew that.

2. Elijah Was Physically Exhausted and Emotionally Spent

But what he just experienced physically and emotionally—he's exhausted. For years Elijah has been running full steam ahead in trying to confront this husband/wife team, this king and queen evil duo, and in that just exhausting himself. But with this last experience he's redlining it. You can hear the pistons starting to clacker and he's in trouble at this point. This is what happens when your adrenaline is all dried up.

Think about what's he's done, just physically. He ran sixteen miles, then he went a hundred miles south into the desert. That wasn't far enough, so he went a day's journey, and he's just finding himself spent. He's spent.

And then emotionally, he's facing an evil king and queen. It's 450 against one. His prayer is a prayer of a faithful man, but it's like *Please, God, please light this thing on fire ... please?* And then the whole thing of the killing of the 450 priests. That's an emotional experience. And then there's always Jezebel. There's nothing that she wouldn't do. She's Satan in a dress.

So, emotionally and physically, he is not well.

3. Elijah Had Separated Himself from Strengthening Relationships

And then, finally, he's been separated from a confidante, from an encourager. He leaves his assistant behind in Beersheba. And it is like a person that is discouraged and despairing to push away the very people that could help pick them up. And then, after you push people away in your life, then you complain that you're lonely.

I mean, this is textbook. That's one of the reasons that I wanted you to see this. Is it any wonder that Elijah finds himself--in the context of his spiritual life now, his thoughts are, *I'm absolutely helpless, I'm completely alone in this violent world around me. Lord, just take my life. Let's go. I just want to go home.*

And his spiritual life is thinking those thoughts about God because his physical life and his soul life is so demented, so he comes up with some demented theology. So, just to be clear, just to summarize, his body is spent, his soul is exhausted without hope—that's why he wants to just die—and his spirit is claiming that God is not in charge of the situation, that he has been left completely alone. "I'll never leave you or forsake you"—*Oh, He left me, and there's no one else here.* And he is without hope. That's where our hero is.

That's where some of you might be right now. Some of you have been there. You've got your juniper tree, your name carved in it. Yep.

God Reaches Out in Love to Elijah

What's beautiful in this story is the never-ending pursuit of God's love for him. I want you to see, I want us to watch and learn, how God deals with Elijah in this context. He's caring for him, and He's caring for his body and his soul and his spirit. Look what happens. It's like a loving parent. I see this as God the father, God the mother. He's just loving this man.

1 Kings 19:5-8

Then he lay down under the juniper tree and fell asleep. All at once an angel touched him and said, "Get up and eat." ⁶ He looked around, and there by his head was some bread baked over hot coals, and a jar of water. He ate and drank and then lay down again. ⁷ The angel of the Lord came back a second time and touched him and said, "Get up and eat, for the journey is too much for you." ⁸ So he got up and ate and drank. Strengthened by that food, he traveled forty days and forty nights until he reached Sinai, the mountain of God.

Chapter 19, verse 5: this is Elijah. "Then he lay down under the juniper tree and fell asleep. All at once an angel touched him and said, 'Get up and eat.' He looked around, and there by his head was some bread baked over hot coals, and a jar of water. He ate and drank and they

he lay down again. The angel of the Lord came back a second time and touched him and said, ‘Get up and eat, for the journey is too much for you.’ So he got up and ate and drank. And he was strengthened by the food, and he traveled forty days and forty nights until he reached Sinai, the mountain of God.”

Elijah’s Body: God Allowed Him Rest and Refreshment

Look at what God does. He baked him bread. It is beneath God to bake bread. He gave him some water. This is Jesus at the shore cooking fish for Peter—*Come here, Peter*. Elijah comes in and says, “I just want to die.” And like a parent hearing some drama in a child, God says, *Okay, why don’t you eat and take a nap?* A loving parent says, *I’ve got to care, I know it, I can hear it in your spirit and I can understand what’s happening in your soul, but your body is broken. Let’s fix that.*

Elijah’s Spirit: God Communicated Wisely with Elijah

And then, He says, *Let’s do some spiritual help*. So, He brings him to Mount Sinai, a place to meet God, famously so. In the context of that, He says, *I want to talk to you. Let’s talk, Elijah*. And then gently He asks a question; He doesn’t accuse, He doesn’t debate, He doesn’t apologize or try to defend himself; He just says, *Elijah, how did you get here?* “Elijah, what are you doing here?”

And Elijah tells Him—he does the lament thing all over again—*Woe is me, I alone am left, I’m helpless in this terrible world*.

And God says, *Okay, look, go stand outside and I’ll present myself to you*. And then in this grand display, God shows who He truly is to those who love Him. First, he sends this ferocious, violent wind. And Elijah’s having to live through this, and it’s knocking down boulders. And then it says, “But Yahweh wasn’t in the wind.” And then the earth began to quake all around him. And then the Bible says, “But Yahweh wasn’t in the earthquake.” And then these roaring flames came and broke out everywhere. Then: “But Yahweh wasn’t in the flames.”

And then, after that, this calm breeze blows by. And the Bible says that Yahweh was in that calm breeze. And He asks very nicely in this calm, “What are you doing here, Elijah?” That is the gentle relentless love of God, restoring his body and restoring his spirit.

And Elijah responds, “I alone am left. They seek my life to kill me.”

And God responds by telling his spirit the truth in a calm way where he can hear it. He says, “Elijah, there are 7,000 that have not bowed the knee to Baal, nor kissed that idol. You’re not alone. And I’m with you. It’s all good.”

Elijah’s Soul: God Gives Him a Close, Personal Friend

And then, finally, in God’s healing of this man—his body has been restored, his spirit has been encouraged—and then his soul. *You are not alone. I’m going to bring you a friend. Your next little person to be a mentor to will not be one of these interns that is not a lot of help for you. It’s going to be Elisha. And Elisha will actually usurp you. You will carry him, and then he will carry you.*

And the story ends in verses 19 through 21 with Elijah and Elisha walking off, growing in strength and power. Yahweh—this grace, this is how Yahweh treats his ministers. And every believer is a minister.

If you do ministry for long, you’re going to be burned out. You’re going to be this way in body, soul, and spirit, and God is going to be there to restore you, body, soul, and spirit.

Application

Here’s how we can apply this today. Look, here’s the thing. Grace going forward is only as strong and delightful as the team is. And because of the way we do ministry here, the ministry is out there, and we’re just getting together to get trained. Everyone at Grace needs to get in competition shape for us to seize the year of 2021. In other words, if we’re a body, then every one of the parts owes it to the other parts of the body to play right and get right. Become like Christ in all of life. And when we say “in all of life,” we mean in all of our humanity.

1 Thessalonians 5:23

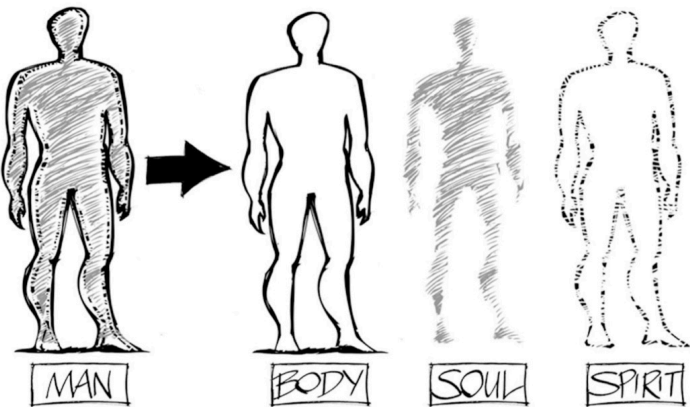
Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit, soul and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Look at what it says in 1 Thessalonians 5. Think about the nature of man, the way you’re made, when I read this to you, and about coming like Christ in all of life, our vision statement. “Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit, soul

and body be preserved blameless”—like Christ in all of life—“at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

You see? Become like Christ in all of life. That’s where we get these sorts of things. It’s anthropological. It is the nature of man that hasn’t changed and will not change. It is the nature of God who cannot change.

The point is—let me show you what it means to get in shape and get well. You’re going to have a homework assignment. I’ll give you heads up right now, you’re going to need to come up with ways that you need to improve in body, soul, and spirit.



But let me define the term. First of all, the nature of man is body, soul, and spirit.

Body

I think we probably understand what body is. Body is our senses: seeing, touch, taste, smelling, hearing—that sort of thing—it’s this stuff. What is the cost of COVID on our bodies? Many of us lost our rhythms. Here’s how to have a healthy body. It’s super simplistic, but you know what? It works. You’ve got to eat right, you’ve got to sleep right, you’ve got to exercise right. And this time last year it was a little easier than right now. We kind of lost that. Even on our staff team, it’s interesting: we didn’t have any weight change on our staff team. It was great. Well, that’s not entirely true. There are some people who lost a lot of weight, and others that

found that weight. And so, overall, that's why I'm wearing a sweater, because COVID shrank all of my clothing and I can't wear it like I used to.

Simple application: become like Christ in your body. We'll talk about that next week. We'll talk about how.

Soul

Next: soul. The definition for soul is interesting. It's you, the nurture and the nature of you. The nurture: how you were raised. The nature of you: how you were made and how you respond, how you've chosen to respond to your nurture and nature. It's also a summation of your memories and your beliefs. You, your soul, is where you find your meaning, your identity. It's your character.

Another way people will describe the soul simply is intellect, how you think; emotion, your feelings and your passions; and your will, the choices that you make and the courage to fulfill those. The soul of you, it shows up—another way of saying it is it's in your personality.

And that's why in the Bible, the Hebrew word in the older Testament for soul is *nephesh*. And *nephesh* is used towards animals sometimes. And people are sometimes confused about that. But it's because the soul is different than the spirit. The soul is the personality; it shows up in the personality. If you've had various dogs, you know dogs, mammals, have different personalities. Whether it's good or bad, happy or sad, or bold, or lazy—different animals, different dogs, different personalities. In the Bible there is never a soul *nephesh* used to apply to a cat. And I'm just telling you what the Bible says and doesn't say, but I don't think they have souls. And that would explain a lot, right? I think it would, at least the ones we've had.

Your soul shows up in your personality. Your soul shows up in your relationships, about how well you relate to other people, how deeply you're able to relate to other people, how you serve other people. What has been the COVID cost on our souls? Hmm... Well, most of what we've been talking about for nine months, at least in the media, has been the one-dimensional aspect of human nature. It's been about our bodies. But the cost to our soul and spirit has been exceptional, at great expense.

In the latest health survey that's been done over a period of twenty-five years now, there's been a 19% drop from this time last year in mental health. This year that 19% drop was the lowest in the history of the survey. Well, yeah. Because in our souls, what were cracks

became fault lines, and sometimes what were fault lines became canyons. All the while, the mayhem that's been going on in the pandemic, the media has monetized fear and anger. They are fueling the soul illness. And it is no wonder that depression is going up like never before, and teen suicide has gone up faster than ever. Domestic abuse and domestic violence ... Those are expressions of soul illness because of the circumstances that we're in. Relationships, like the fragile ones, if they were just neglected, they were lost, in many respects. And those that were dysfunctional, codependent relationships, somebody got well and stood up for themselves, or they just doubled down and said, *If you're going to stay in this, you're going to have to submit more to me.* But you don't hear a lot of stories about bad relationships getting better. You just hear about bad relationships either ending or doubling down.

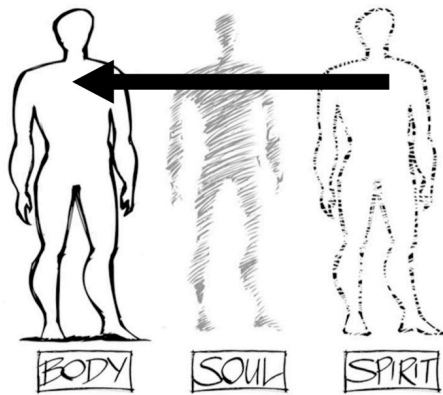
In the context of our soul, it means becoming like Christ in our soul.

Spirit

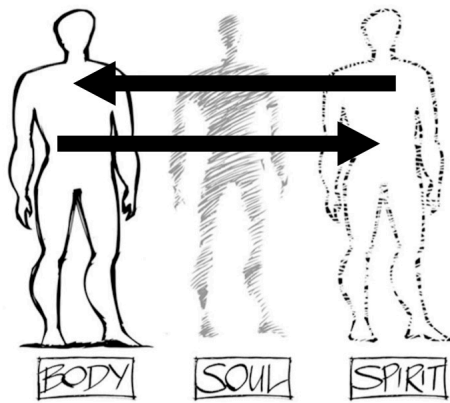
The nature of man is body, soul, and spirit. Spirit—become like Christ in all of life. What that means is to have a spiritual relationship like Christ has with His Father, that depth of relationship. Sometimes we would use the spirit to be the fruit of the Spirit. So, it would be the supernatural change that starts from the inside out. The fruit of the Spirit is love, and that love starts to infect our soul and it actually changes our body. It's that supernatural thing.

To have a healthy spirit is to have, like Christ, the same desire for evangelism and impact because we want to make a difference in life, because that's where we find our purpose. To have a healthy spirit means that we can hear the voice of God, like Elijah--that still, small voice. You have to be so absolutely surrendered to the will of God and the desire to please Him so that He'll speak to you. A healthy spirit means to have the courage to do what the will of God says.

And let me just remind you of this. There is overlap. The nature of man is body, soul, spirit, but they are connected.



And when your spirit is neglected or mistreated, you lose your vision for eternal things, that you're eternal in the first place. You don't have an eternal perspective on life, you don't look at heaven as home. And then what happens is you get distracted and are looking around and now your soul is starting to make choices based on values where you're just keeping up with the Joneses. And the next thing you know, you're coveting your neighbor's goods, and then you're coveting your neighbor's wife. I don't just want to be like the Joneses; I want Mrs. Jones. And that leads to all sorts of physical problems, literal physical problems, because it started with your spirit out of alignment. It connects.



It connects the other way too. You neglect, abuse, or mistreat your body, it has chemical consequences upon your brain and blood. And then your intellect, emotion, and will are kinked out of place. And you're feeling things you shouldn't be feeling, and you're making choices that you shouldn't be making. And how does that affect your spirit? You can't hear God like you used to.

Homework

So, the homework is this. Come next week. What are goals for what it looks like to be healthy, body, soul, and spirit? And here's why: it's not us, it's you. Because the way we do church here is a bunch of little saints, where every believer's a minister, and the ministry's out there. And for us to seize the day, I mean "seize the year," we owe it to each other to get into competition shape, so that as a collective team we can do great and glorious things for God. If we're part of a body, then we all need to play our part and be submissive to one another.

And listen, friends, we're bent. Let me end with this absolute statement of the obvious: we are bent away from all things healthy, body, soul, and spirit. Anything worth having, we have to work for. The good stuff in life is uphill. We're like salmon. To survive, all things good are upstream. And you know, fish that are able to go downstream, they don't work. Even a dead fish

can float downstream. Salmon fight for their survival. That's where the good stuff is. Yeah, the good stuff is upstream. I understand the metaphor.

But in your body, floating is ice cream and donuts. You don't have to work hard at that. Swimming upstream is fruit and barbecue. Yeah, it ain't all bad.

Your soul is bent. Floating is just a surrender. Just be a victim to the way that you were raised. You were abused, you were neglected, so you're going to be angry. *I'm going to be respected, yeah, because I want to be.* Or you could swim upstream. Stand up, get up, swim upstream, and be nice and kind and generous, going against your nurturing. You could float downstream and be a victim of the way you were made. Look at you, a perfectionist. Yeah, perfect pitch. And like some people with perfect pitch, all you hear are the bad notes. And you criticize and condemn and there's no happiness in your life. Well, there you go. That's floating downstream. That's what dead fish do. Or, you could get up. You could swim upstream and let God miraculously change your soul. Who cares how you're made, in that context? You could rise above that and be known for being graceful and joyful and full of laughter and encouragement. Yeah, you can.

Spiritually speaking, when you float, whenever you just do whatever is easiest, honestly, you make yourself a god. You just serve yourself. You turn in. It's me and mine. But what if you chose not to? What if you chose to let truth live in your spirit, that He is the King and you surrendered to Him? What would that be like? You'd become self-forgetful. That is the fruit of true spiritual health. And in the freedom of your self-forgetfulness, you have all sorts of power. And you serve God for His glory, and you serve others for God's glory.

So, Grace forward: Here's the final challenge for everybody. Grace forward is this: It is us collectively, because us collectively needs you and me, individually, to get into competition shape, right? We're in the playoffs. This matters. This year, 2021—seize that year, Grace. It means that we're going to become like Christ in all of life and every one of us are the ministers to make this happen. We need you. We need you to do this for us, for the glory of God.

So, you show up next week. What do you need to do to get healthy, body, soul, and spirit? And I'll help you by showing you how a person gets healthy. Right now, who's in? The year 2021—let's see some hands. Thank you.

Let's pray.

Lord Jesus, we love that You're a God where every day is a new year. Every day is a new time to start over, stop looking back and start looking forward. We love that You are a reckless lover, that You know how to heal us body, soul, and spirit. Lord, I'd ask that You would give us the insight and wisdom as image bearers, of what we need to do in our lives, for our body, for our soul, for our spirit. Make it well, that we would let Your magic, Your miraculous Spirit, touch us, so that we would glorify You in our life, and then collectively as a church, a bunch of individuals meeting together, a bunch of individual ministers meeting together to serve our King in His kingdom; that we might help everyone that we touch become like Christ in all of life. Lord, let us be that church. Help us see the vision of seizing the year 2021. I am delighted, I am grateful, Lord, that we a biblical vision and we have a biblical direction. We don't have to change things radically; we just need to work the plan, work the instruction. I'm grateful for that. So, Lord, help us do that next thing. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.