

DRIVEN BY A PASSION FOR GOD

(Piper's Christian Hedonism)

Intro

We are so glad to be back this morning and I cannot wait to work through what we are going to discuss over the next 6 weeks. I have been challenged over the last few months to think through **what we are to be about as the body of Christ**. What would He want for us and from us? That is a great thing for all of us to reflect on. I have been reading so many things related to this that are helping to form my thoughts and what I hope to do over the next few weeks is help us all think through our purpose together. We will be covering the following issues in the coming weeks.

- ❑ Christian Hedonism
- ❑ Being Gospel-Centered
- ❑ Loving Christ
- ❑ Loving the People around us
- ❑ Loving the people in the Body
- ❑ Depending on God Completely

It should be a great time of formation for us. Some of you have probably already worked through these things. For you, I hope this is a refresher. Others of us need to rethink these issues and make sure we are on track. For us, I hope the light comes on and we see what needs to be modified. Some here might have never thought about all this. For you, I hope this will help to display God's heart for His body. Regardless of where you are, our time should challenge us to move forward confidently.

The main text today is going to be **1 Peter 1:3-9**. Please turn there so we can read it together.

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, 5 who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. 6 In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, 7 so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. 8 Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, 9 obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

Let's pray.

As I said above, I have been thinking and praying about this for some time now and it has been interesting the way God has brought many different quotes to mind over that time that in my mind at least, fit together. I would like to share a couple of those with you and ask you to contemplate them with me.

Wall-E	"I don't want to survive, I want to live!"
Jonathan Edwards	Resolution #6 "Resolved, to live with all my might, while I do live."
October Sky	"You don't give up, do you?" "I can't."

There have also been many passages where I see a common thread. Here are just a few of those.

Philippians 1:21	"For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."
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Philippians 3:8-11	“Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.”
Psalms 37:4	“Delight yourself in the Lord, and He will give you the desires of your heart.”
Psalms 42:1-2	“As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?”
Psalms 63:1	“O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water.”
Colossians 3:5	“Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.”
Jeremiah 9:23-24	“Thus says the Lord: “Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the Lord.””
Galatians 6:14	“But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.”

Desire and passion, that is what all these have in common. In fact, this is just a small sampling of everything around us that illustrates **we are controlled by our drives and our passion**. Do you see that in your own life? Can you see that whatever you love most will determine your actions and how you spend your time? I can see that in my own life. Sometimes it is good, sometimes not so good.

What do you treasure most? What drives you? What in your life must you have in order to keep going? When we read the passages above, it should cause us to ask such questions. Do you treasure what you should?

Let's take a quick look at two parables to see this.

Matthew 13:44-46

““The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it.”

Is that your experience with God and His kingdom? Is that how you feel about Him? Why not? What is missing in our lives that determines this is not our experience? How can we make sure that this is true of us?

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Our Text—*1 Peter 1:3-9*

According to this passage, what is the motivation for the Christian life? Is it meant to be fear? Do you get the sense that we are to obey so that we do not get punished? I would suggest that this is not the motive at all. The motive is love toward God.

What is love? How would you describe it?

What does it mean to love God with all your heart, mind soul and strength? Mark 12:30

Is this meant to be simply obedience?

What about 1 Corinthians 13:3 that says, "If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing."

If I can give away everything and even die and still not have love, then love cannot be simply obedience to God's commands.

Love needs to be more than obedience, but not less than that. In other words, **if we love God, we will obey, but it goes deeper than that.** Think about how you love other people. How would you describe that love? Think about how you love your children, if you have them, or how you love a spouse, or even your parents. What characterizes such love?

I love the description of love given in *Genesis 29:18-20*.

"Jacob loved Rachel. And he said, 'I will serve you seven years for your younger daughter Rachel.' Laban said, 'It is better that I give her to you than that I should give her to any other man; stay with me.' So Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed to him but a few days because of the love he had for her."

Is service to God a joy for you because of your great love for Him?

If God is your treasure, you will gladly do anything for Him. You will suffer trials gladly. You will wait patiently. You will sacrifice everything for Him.

So, what we are suggesting then is that the problem is our love for God. We do not love Him like we should. Better yet, **we are not driven by a passion for God so that all we do reflects that love.**

Do you want to be driven by this kind of love and passion?

I think the solution is what Piper calls **Christian Hedonism—pursuing your greatest pleasure in God.** Many would suggest that hedonism is a bad word to use because it seems to be taking our focus off of God and on to our pleasure. I can understand that and would be fine if you choose to use a different word. But, Piper says the following, "Christian Hedonism does not make a god out of pleasure. It says you have already made a god out of whatever you take most pleasure in." *Desiring God* Page 367

So the issue is really what you take most pleasure in, not what you call it. I want to take most pleasure in God. I want to treasure Him more than anything else in the world.

Now, what if you do not want to pursue this? What if you don't actively pursue God as your treasure? Let me suggest like Piper above that **you are pursuing something as your treasure and if it is not God, you have made yourself an idol.** Call it idolatry or spiritual adultery, but the issue is that you are putting something before God in your life. That needs to be checked.

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The problem is that all of us will be distracted for a time, especially believers. We will not always love God the way we should. We will make idols. We will have to battle every day to keep the right focus. Romans 7 and Galatians 5:17 teach us that the believer will not be sinless, but rather have to battle our own desires. The amazing thing is that we are accepted anyway! The gospel covers even our lack of love for God. Jesus came, lived and died to completely cover and pay for all your sins, even the one you committed this morning by being distracted from Christ alone! He took your punishment so you are perfectly accepted. Isn't that good news? **We often spend so much time making excuses for our sin that we downplay the incredible gospel that we should treasure.**

So, since this is true, **doesn't His love for you in Jesus Christ stir up in you a love for Him?**

Doesn't this cause you to want to pursue Him with all you have? Doesn't this make Him your greatest treasure since He has given you everything you need most?

Let's learn day-by-day how to love Him as much as we should. Let's learn together how to long for Him like we long for water in a desert. Let's cry out to Him together.

Let's pray.