

I. Introduction

- A. You have made a great choice by coming today, because you are in on part one of a new series — a series that just might become one of the most motivational and positively transformative series ever in our church.
- B. That's what I'm praying for, and that's what I'm preaching for.
- C. Interested?
- D. First, I'd like to give you an update.

II. **Light the Path**

- A. One month ago, I invited you to be part of something very special. We wanted to make a difference for two largely unseen groups of people.
  - 1. First, kids who are trapped in sex-trafficking in the land of Nepal.
  - 2. Second, seekers who are looking for God online, at the rate of 200 people per second, asking Google, "Is God real?"
- B. Our goal was to raise \$50,000.00 in one month, to split 50/50 between those two missions.
- C. And with that, our goal was to raise that \$50k without it coming out of our regular offerings.
- D. On that part of it, I'm happy to tell you that our regular offerings stayed super strong, and your giving has been above budget. So a big thank you for that.
  - 1. The Bible says, "Let him who is taught the Word share in all good things with him who teaches." (Galatians 6:6)
  - 2. You've been doing that.
  - 3. Your consistent generosity is making a huge difference in thousands of lives.
- E. On the first part of it, the goal of \$50,000.00... would you like to know the final total?
  - 1. The final total is \$37,599.19 ABOVE our \$50,000 goal, for a beautiful, God-blessed total of \$87,599.19.
- F. I'm so happy, because this is going to change the eternal trajectory of thousands of people, and especially precious children who are suffering in horrendous conditions.
- G. This is a giant blessing. This is the power of the Gospel. This is the mission we are on. This is the best kind of love of all, Calvary Love. This is Pathway Church.
  - 1. We're just getting warmed up in 2024, amen?
  - 2. Okay, who's ready for the Word?

III. Scripture

- A. *"Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast the Word of life."* (Philippians 2:14-16)
- B. When I see these words, the first thing I think is that this is God speaking to me. And the second thing I think is that this is God speaking to us.
- C. If Jesus were to come walking through that door, and set up some time to sit down with me, and then with you, over coffee or lunch or whatever...
  - 1. He would ask us what's going on, because he cares...
  - 2. He would reassure us how much he loves us, because he does...
  - 3. And one way or another he would echo these very same words to us once again, because these words light the path into our fullest possible experience of his care and of his love today.
- D. The title of my talk today is the word I have underlined:
  - 1. **Become!**
  - 2. To become means to step out from one state of being and to step into another state of being.
- E. And from cover to cover, the Words of Jesus, are always calling us to step into a State of Being that is...
  - 1. beloved, blessed, exceptional, special, meaningful, desirable, abundant, prosperous, positive, whole, healthy, peaceful, loving, sane, joyful, purposeful, forgiven, forgiving, victorious, generous, gracious, mature, transcendent, adventuresome, loving, normal, supernatural, challenging, pure, prepared, fully equipped, fully armed, fully authentic, wholesome, not boring, not lame, not in your comfort zone, and not like everybody else.
- F. Become that. Become all that. That's what Jesus would say to you.
- G. Don't be complacent. Don't be boring. Don't be lukewarm and halfhearted with God, because that makes you lukewarm and halfhearted toward the one precious life you get.
- H. That's what he is saying to you in this verse. In fact, that's what faith is for. That's what grace does. It's why Jesus sacrificed his life for you.
- I. "That you may become."
- J. In this verse, you can find the command, the result, the setting, the means, and the power to become a very special kind of human, and a very glorious kind of Christian.
- K. Let's take that one and a time.

IV. Become

A. **The Command**

- 1. **"Do all things without complaining and disputing."**
- 2. This would be fun to preach a whole series on. And this would be important for us to preach to ourselves.
- 3. This paragraph of Scripture was originally written in Greek. We are reading an English translation of a Greek text.
- 4. Translation is tricky, and the main Bible translations are all awesome, and we respect them.
- 5. But as a pastor, one of my jobs is to hammer and hammer away at the rock of Scripture until it breaks open and shows the gold inside.

6. This is one of those rare times when I think the translation could be improved upon, and I'm not the only one....
7. The idea here is:
  - a) Do all things willingly and without hesitation.
  - b) (See the commentary by Greek scholar Heinrich Meyer.)
8. And this is mainly in your relation to God.
9. The first word means murmuring and pouting your way into the stuff you have to do.
10. The second word means without hesitations... There are a lot of examples of this in the Bible.
  - a) God told Abraham to move from one place to another, and he did. He didn't fill out spreadsheets first. He didn't calculate the costs of living. He just put it in gear, and went.
  - b) God told Noah to build an ark. He didn't ask why. He didn't cipher through all the alternatives. He didn't analyze it to death. He just cut down some trees and started building.
  - c) God told Joshua to march around the walls of Jericho. No questions about physics, or what everyone would think. He lined up his troops and got marching.
  - d) If you boil down this command, you get this:  
**(1) Make the choice every single day to fire up your own heart when it comes to your life and walk with God.**
11. You have to lean in.
  - a) You have to want it. You have to have a fire in your belly.
12. There's stuff in your life that needs to change. Things to let go of. Things to start. Relationships to mend. Big choices to make.
13. Don't resist God's truth on this. Don't make faith harder than it needs to be.
14. If you don't want a strong walk with Jesus, it's not going to happen. If you're on and off with God, it's not going to happen. There are too many distractions, too many alternatives, and too many competing claims on your time.
  - a) There are some forces that are pulling you back from this. We will talk about them.
15. You can become a lot of things that the world wants, but will not become what this verse is talking about—and there will always be a hole in your heart—unless you take 100% responsibility to fan the fires of your life with God every single day.
16. So that's the command. Then there's the consequence:

#### B. The Result

1. **So that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault.**
2. I've spent the last couple of months praying and asking God where our focus should be this year as a church.
3. I've settle on a theme for the year, and it's big, and I think it's going to be powerful.
4. Would you like to know the theme for 2024 for Pathway?
5. Great...I'm going to reveal that next weekend, so don't miss it.
6. But it's two words, and I've already used them in this message... hint hint.
7. In fact, I'm hoping that you will turn up the heat in your own heart, and that we can provide something so powerful and so real week after week that you won't want to miss a single weekend in 2024.
8. So that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault.
9. Are you saved? Then you're a child of God. You're in his family. God has adopted you. All believers in Jesus are brothers and sisters in the beautifully messy family of faith.
10. If you're saved, you're in the family. Don't stress about that ever again.
11. But now, as yourself, as a child of God, what kind of child are you?
  - a) Wayward? Prodigal? Difficult? Whiny? Demanding? Absent? Apathetic? Cold?
  - b) Loving? Nurturing? Supportive? Fun? Grateful? Happy? Gentle? Helpful? Protective? Respectful?**(1) Choose your "Word Cloud."**
12. The result of doing all things in your life with God willingly and without hesitation is that you will become a blameless, harmless, faultless child of God.
  - (1) When you fire up your heart for God, you can't help but becoming a joyful, positive member of a new kind of family, the family of faith. That's the result.
13. So my question for you is going to be, all year long, what kind of child of God do you want to be?
  - a) So that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault.
14. So there's the command, and the result of following that command to become a very special kind of Christian.
15. Then there's the setting.

#### C. The Setting

1. **In the midst of a crooked and perverse generation.**
2. It was true 2,000 years ago. It's true today.
  - a) The Greek word for crooked is *skolios*.
    - (1) It means winding and twisted. It was used in ancient writings for everything from curly hair to a labyrinth to matted hair that's hard to untangle.
  - b) The Greek word for perverse is *diastrepho*.
    - (1) It was used in ancient writings for going on a journey and getting lost. It was used by potters if a piece of pottery had gotten deformed. I was used for following bad advice or even misinformation.
3. I think it's easy to take these words in the wrong way. In a judgmental, negative way.
  - a) That the world is a bunch of crooks and perverts.
  - b) There's some truth in that, but that is actually a metaphorical translation that just might take the words some steps beyond where Paul was taking them.

4. Church, when we say that stuff, and when we think that way, we accomplish exactly the opposite of what this verse is trying to accomplish through our lives.
5. This generation smells our smug, self-righteous, judgmental spirit from a mile away.
6. When Scripture says that we live in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, that's not a license for us to wag the giant foam finger of shame in everybody's face.
7. Paul is simply saying that the generation of unbelievers that we swim in every day is dazed and confused. Their ideas about life are all tangled up and misinformed.
  - a) This is a call to compassion. This is a call to tenderness.
8. This is a call to let our hearts break with the pain of friends who have lost their way, and are groping in darkness, and they don't even know why.
9. Lost people are lost, people.
10. When Paul writes that you can become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, one of the things he's saying is DON'T MAKE IT WORSE.
  - a) When it comes to how harsh this world is, don't make it worse.
  - b) When it comes to how critical social media is, don't make it worse.
  - c) When it comes to how depressed and discouraged so many people are, don't make it worse.
    - (1) Don't add to the darkness.
    - (2) Don't add to the pain.
    - (3) Don't be at fault in that.
11. St Paul said something in the book of Ephesians that always touches my heart.
  - a) Remember that at that time — meaning before you were saved — remember that at that time you were without Christ, having no hope and without God in the world (Ephesians 2:11, 12).
12. He's saying, Never forget what it felt like to not have Jesus.
13. Remember that. Remember that confusion. Those questions. Those doubts. Remember not knowing what you don't know.
14. Remember the indifference... why should I care about church?
15. Remember the fear...
16. About four weeks ago, we were getting ready to start one of our Christmas services, and one of our regular attenders came in and told one of our pastors...
  - a) "Hey, we need some prayers. I brought 2 friend with me to church tonight. They haven't been in church in years. But they're sitting out in the car, and they're afraid to come in. They don't know what's going to happen."
17. They were afraid.
18. That was such a powerful reminder to me. These are grown adults. I have no doubts they go anywhere and everywhere with no problems.
19. But now, they are in a car, parked in our parking lot, and basically paralyzed with fear.
  - a) I wish I could tell you what happened next... but I can't because I don't know. So if you know, please let me know, because we're all dying to know.
20. Never forget what it felt like to not have Jesus. God is big. God is scary. This whole thing is outside most people's comfort zone.
  - a) Just because you're comfortable with all this doesn't mean everybody is. Never forget.
21. Two weekends ago, one of our prayer team members brought a woman to me for an introduction. She had tears in her eyes and was bubbling over with excitement.
  - a) The prayer team member said, "Our friend here just prayed to receive Jesus as her Savior."
  - b) I said, "That's awesome! I'm so excited for you. Welcome to God's Family."
  - c) She said, "Bill, this is my first time ever in a church. But I just needed God in my life."
  - d) I found that so moving.
  - e) And then she added, "I just got out of prison. I've been incarcerated for so long. But I know I needed God in my life."
  - f) And now she has God in her life, because of Jesus, Amen?
22. When it comes to God, do all things willingly and without hesitation (there's the command), that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault (there's the result), in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation (there's the setting).
23. This is the setting of our lives.
  - a) **The kind of believer Jesus calls you to become is a self-identified missionary, rubbing shoulders every day with friends who urgently need Jesus.**
24. And I know we all have our own needs, and we all need our own levels of rescuing, but what if part of our own healing comes from investing our lives in the healing and deliverance of others?
25. I said there was a command, a result, a setting, and then the means to become a very special kind of human.

#### D. The Means

1. "Among whom you shine as lights in the world."
2. What is this saying?
3. God is inviting you to become a different kind of Christian.
4. The world is dark. Believers... specifically believers who become what Paul is talking about here... those believers are lights in the darkness.
5. And not just light, but the idea in this word is bright lights. Blazing lights. Sunshine breaking through on a cloudy day lights.

6. Can you imagine what our city would look like if half of us would become that?
7. Let me show you what that looks like.
8. There's a story where two believers in Jesus are going from city to city telling people about Jesus. Their names are Paul and Silas.
9. In one city, they cast out a demon from a demon possessed girl—I preached about that topic before—but the people didn't like that, so they had Paul and Silas arrested. Matt Roberts talked about this last week!
10. The next thing that happened is that the authorities have Paul and Silas beaten with whips... It says "they laid many stripes on them" which means a really severe beating.
11. What does it mean to shine as lights in a dark world in this situation?
12. The next thing that happens is they're locked in the deepest part of the prison, and their feet are put in stocks.
  - a) What reaction would you expect? What reaction would you give?
  - b) There they are in the crowded prison, and Paul says to Silas, "This jail stinks. I'm so uncomfortable. The stocks are killing me. And my back is so sore..."
  - c) Silas says back, "So this is how God repays us? This is what we get for serving him and shining the light of Jesus?"
13. If you know the story, is that what happened?
14. No. It was the opposite.
  - a) *"But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them."* (Acts 16:25)
15. And the rest is history.
16. That, my friends, is shining as a bright light in a dark world.
17. That is the way that God will heal the wounds of this world.
  - a) When I say become, this is what we are to become:
  - b) **At Pathway, God is raising up men and women who become agents of grace and truth in a culture of confusion and pain.**
18. We're God's secret weapon.
19. But you say, I don't think I can actually do that.
20. Great because you can't and I can't either. It's beyond us.
21. That's why there's a power for all this.

#### E. The Power

1. **Holding fast the Word of Life.**
2. The power is the Word of Life, the Bible and specifically the good news in the Bible. The Word of Life.
3. You cannot live like Jesus unless you think like Jesus and you cannot think like Jesus apart from going deep in the Bible.
4. That's why when we get together, we open our Bibles (or apps). That's why we look again and again at God's Word.
5. This is the power.
6. This is the supernatural power of God getting inside our thoughts and emotions.
7. "For the Word of God is living and powerful," says (Hebrews 4:12).
8. That means that when you take in the Bible, you don't just get information, you get power.
9. You don't just get truth, you get power.
10. If you're going to be a light in this world, you need a power source. And it isn't you.
11. It's the Bible. It's the truth. It's the Word.
12. Jesus said that the Scriptures — the whole book of God — speaks of him. It tells of his Person and his Work. It tells of his Cross. It tells of our salvation.
13. And it doesn't just tell... it wires truth into our inward parts. The Word of Life heals damaged emotions. It demolishes strongholds. It dismantles lies. It is the Holy Spirit's way of remodeling your interior life so that you look like, sound like and become like Jesus.
  - a) **We can only become agents of grace and truth by going deeper with God through his Word.**

#### V. Conclusion

- A. I just want to add one last thing here.
- B. I said my title today was Become. It comes from our verse.
- C. There are many people in our church, excellent Christians. You have been this way for a long time.
- D. You know the Bible. You are comfortable with church life. Your friends are largely Christian. You are involved in ministry. You are an excellent church person.
- E. You are awesome, and in many ways, you are the backbone of our church.
- F. But I would not be doing my job as a pastor if I didn't ask you a question.
  1. Is there anything left for you to become?
- G. Because I think the temptation is to reach a certain level of spiritual maturity, and then settle in. You're better than the average believer. You pray more, read your Bible more, serve more, give more. That's awesome.
- H. At the same time, I want to tell you there is never a time to let your spiritual life coast.
- I. Think about this:
  1. **Becoming is a far greater adventure than just being.**
  2. *"Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me."* (Philippians 3:12)
- J. This is me warning you that in 2024 there just might be some adventures ahead.
- K. It scares me to say it, but together, let's become something above and beyond anything we ever imagined.