

## I. The Introduction

- A. True story: my friend was a pastor in transition. I'll call him Joe. We were youth pastors at the same time in different churches and then we both become pastors in different churches and were buddies.
- B. His current church was in a transition, and Joe was losing his job. So Margi and I met with Joe and his wife to talk it through.
- C. Joe said, "I'm so upset, and I don't know what to do."
- D. He told me all his options, and he didn't like any of them. So I asked him a question.
- E. I said: "Joe, what do you want?"
  - 1. Joe said, "I just want to do the will of God."
- F. I said: "I believe you. I admire that, Joe. But that's not what I'm asking. I'm asking what do YOU want?"
  - 1. He said, "I don't know what you mean."
- G. I said: "Joe, look inside your heart, look to your own desires, and tell me what you want."
  - 1. He said, "No, no, no, no, no! It's not what I want. It's what God wants."
- H. I said: "I understand that. I get that. But what I really want to know is where is your heart? What is your desire? What do you want?"
  - 1. With that, he just burst into tears and couldn't get out another word.

## II. The War

- A. You woke up in a warzone today.
- B. And the fiercest battle isn't for your money, your job, or your stuff. The war rages at one precise and primary point: the command center of your soul.
  - 1. **There is an invisible, all-out assault on the territory of your will.**
- C. The Bible puts it this way:
  - 1. *"That they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will."* (2 Timothy 2:26)
- D. And what part of you does he work overtime to take captive? Your free will.
- E. You have a diabolical enemy, and his entire strategy is not to get you to be bad, but to get you to be nobody.
  - 1. He can't break God's promises, so he wages an all-out war to break your will.
  - 2. Your sense of agency. Your ownership of the direction of your own life.
- F. He wants to infect you with a weak-willed virus that convinces you that you can't, even when God says you can. He wants you so paralyzed by that lie that you never even get around to thinking about dreaming bigger or believing bigger.
- G. He wants you lulled to sleep in a comfortable cage of complacency. He wants you to forget you were born for battle and created for victory.
- H. Well I'm here to sound an alarm today. Today, the trumpet blasts. Today, we remember who we are, we remember WHOSE we are, and we escape the snare of the devil.

## III. Series Intro

- A. We've been in a series of talks through the book of Philippians called: **Quit Telling Yourself I Can't**.
- B. We've been learning how to fight the battle that matters most—the one that's won or lost right here inside your own heart and your own mind.
- C. The title of my message today is not a suggestion; it's a declaration of independence for your whole psychological make up.
- D. It's called: **Quit Surrendering Your Ground**.
- E. And we're going to find our marching orders in a couple of power-packed verses in Philippians 2:12-13
- F. In these words is the divine counter-offensive. It is God's strategy to help you stop retreating, to draw a line in the sand, and to start taking back every inch of the territory that Jesus Christ bled and died to give you.
- G. Why did my friend Joe break down? Why did a simple question—"What do YOU want?"—short-circuit a man who loved God with his whole heart?
- H. Because Joe, like so many of us, had been poisoned by a lie. A pious sounding painful lie. I think it's a doctrine of demons dressed in a choir robe. The lie that to be holy, you have to amputate your own desires and will.

## I. Teaching

- 1. Your soul has 3 parts: mind, will (volition), emotions.
- 2. Your will is the part of you that wants, that desires, that chooses.
- 3. Your will is the command post of your soul.
- 4. The New Testament word for your will is the Greek Word *thelo* (verb) and *thelema* (noun).

## J. So...

- 1. **In CREATION, God gave Adam and Eve dominion — the power of free will and human agency.**
- 2. **In THE FALL, the free will was broken, and the human race went into bondage.**
- 3. **In SALVATION, you get your dominion back. God restores your your free will, your crown, your scepter, and your throne and tells you to reign (Romans 5:17).**
- 4. **In FAITH, you make this royal potential the reality of your life.**
  - a) Unfortunately way too many Christians never got the memo.
  - b) They have taught that your free will is bad, that your will must be broken, and that your will is the bad guy in your soul. So they're still in the snare of the devil.
    - (1) That was my friend Joe's struggle.
- 5. But none of that is what the Bible teaches. It's a lie.

## K. And when you believe that lie, you surrender the most valuable ground you possess.

- 1. You surrender the territory of your will.
- 2. You surrender the landscape of your dreams.
- 3. You surrender the birthright of your own God-given desires.

## L. So that is why we are here today. That is why we are going to war against that lie.

## IV. The Victory

- A. The verses right *before* today's paragraph paint a picture of the most absolute, cosmic victory you can possibly imagine...
  - 1. *"...that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth..."* (Philippians 2:10)
- B. Paul says that God has exalted Jesus to the highest place and given Him the name that is above every name... so that at the name of Jesus, EVERY knee will bow.
  - 1. In heaven. On earth. And listen to this—under the earth.
  - 2. That is a direct reference to the demonic realm.
- C. Your King has won an absolute and total victory. Your enemy is a defeated foe. He is a squatter with an eviction notice, not a king with a crown.

- D. His snare is a broken snare. His captivity is a fake captivity. Be free. The battle's over. Exit the premises of darkness and despair.
- E. And that is why verse 12 starts with one of the most powerful words in the Bible: Therefore.
  - 1. Because the enemy is defeated... therefore...
  - 2. Because every dark lord will bow to him... therefore... here are your marching orders.

## V. Marching Orders

### A. Occupy Your Promised Land

1. *"Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation..."* (Philippians 2:12)
2. This is one of those Bible verses that get used as a stick to beat Christians over the head.
  - a) Yes, they say, you're saved by grace, but you have to live by working it out, or else you're not saved.
  - b) See, they say, there's God's part and there's your part. God's part is to save you, but your part is to work out your salvation...
  - c) See, they say, you can't push this grace thing too far... you've got to have "balance."
  - d) I've gotten to a place where every time I hear a Christian preacher talk about balance, I throw up in my mouth.
3. Balance? How do you balance grace? How do you balance an old rugged cross? What counterweight is there to match the suffering and blood of Christ? Grace is by definition one-sided.
  - a) He suffered.
  - b) He died.
  - c) He paid the price.
  - d) He did the work.
  - e) He rose again.
  - f) He gives the gift.
  - g) He saves the soul.
  - h) He grants life.
  - i) He makes the new creation.
  - j) He loves.
  - k) He saves.
  - l) He's the one.
    - (1) So you're going to balance all what with what, exactly?
    - (2) It makes no sense.
4. Dear Christian... back away from your hyper religious super-spirituality and quit trying to bring balance to a wildly imbalanced wonder called grace.
5. But my deluded legalist friend might ask, yes, but doesn't this verse say right here you should work out your salvation? See, there's the balance. You work it out. See? See?
6. And I say, stop.
  - a) **Study the word "work out."**
  - b) That word 'work out' doesn't mean 'work for.'
  - c) It doesn't even mean to work out.
    - (1) The Greek word means '**fully activate what's already in you.**'
    - (2) It means '**bring to full expression the potential lying dormant within you.**'
7. This is not a command to try harder; or work harder. It's a command to quit hiding in the corner.
8. QUIT SURRENDERING YOUR GROUND, and start exploring the vast realms of grace that have been given to you in Christ.
9. God brought his people to the Promised Land. He said, I have given you this land. Go and take possession of every square inch.
10. I'm telling you, God has done the same for you. I'll come right back to that...
11. But marching order 1 for you today is to go occupy your promised land, and leave no blessing untouched, unreceived, and unexperienced.
  - a) Activate your full potential in Christ.
12. But what's the fear and trembling about?

### B. Wake up your spirit.

1. *"Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling..."* (Philippians 2:12)
2. What's the fear and trembling about?
3. There's only one thing a child of God has to fear.
  - a) It is NOT losing your salvation—that is sealed in the blood of Jesus Christ!
  - b) It is NOT going to hell—that debt has been paid in full!
  - c) It is NOT God abandoning you—He has tattooed your name on the palm of His hand!
  - d) It is NOT the devil dragging you away—your King has already crushed his head!
    - (1) So what's left to fear?
4. Let's go back to your promised land... that gigantic, mind-blowing inheritance that came with Jesus when he saved you.
5. The only thing that should make your heart pound with holy fear is this:
  - a) That after being handed the unsearchable riches of Christ,
  - b) After being made a joint-heir with the King of the Universe,
  - c) After being blessed with "every" spiritual blessing,
  - d) After receiving the title and deed to the God-blessed abundant life, signed and sealed by the blood of Christ...
  - e) After undergoing the miraculous surgical intervention by which you were made a shiny, fresh, beautiful, magnificent, glory-radiating, power-infused entirely new creation,
  - f) After having at long last entered the exalted status of one so richly blessed, highly favored, and deeply loved...
    - (1) **The scariest tragedy for a Christian is that you would walk through your entire life and never fully activate all your riches in Christ.**
6. THAT is the thing to fear! THAT is the omission that should make you tremble! That you would stand in front of a mountain of beautifully wrapped gifts and die leaving most of them unopened!
7. You're a possessor of the high calling of God! Get after it.

8. Take hold of every ounce of the life He had in mind for you when He saved you!
9. So don't you settle! Don't you dare go lukewarm! You belong to Pathway Church! Wake up. Get up. RISE UP to your full stature in Christ!
  - a) The Bible says it in Hebrews 4:1: "...let us fear lest any of you seem to have stopped short of..." the full blessing of God.
  - b) It's saying the main thing you have to fear is having a weak-willed lukewarm desire for the full measure of His grace!
10. Your biggest enemy isn't a demon with a pitchfork; it's the comfortable coma of complacency. It's being okay with being okay with a little bit of grace when a vast ocean has been given you.
11. When Arnold wrote his book on body building, his chapter on arms was called "Filling Out Your Shirtsleeves."
  - a) And when God invited you to step fully into your birthright, he called it:
    - (1) Rising up to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ (Ephesians 4:13).
12. He's inviting you to fill out the shirtsleeves of Christ and his grace.
13. Wake up your spirit. Nap time's over.
14. Or else you will glide through your one and only life—loved by God, saved by grace, guaranteed a spot in heaven—and you will wake up at the end of it all and realize you were one of those weak-willed, vacillating, can't-make-up-your-mind timid souls who never knew either the thrill of victory or the agony of defeat, because you played it safe and you took the path of least resistance.
15. Jesus calls out to you from heaven today!
  - a) He is telling you that you should be more terrified of being one of David's brothers, cowering in their tents, safe and anonymous and forgotten...
  - b) ...than of being a young David, armed with nothing but pebbles and faith, walking out onto the battlefield to face down a giant!
  - c) Rise above the voice telling you to stay stuck. Stay little. Stay addicted, dysfunctional, and never even give a thought to what it is that puts a fire in your belly and lights up your world.
16. Flip the switch. Activate every last bit of the grace jam-packed into your life by the miracle of your salvation.
17. That's your marching order from heaven... Are you in? If you're in, say Amen!

### C. KNOW WHAT YOU WANT AND PURSUE IT

1. "for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure." (Philippians 2:13)
2. This is another one of those Bible verses that get used as a stick to beat Christians over the head.
3. I need you to lean in, because I'm about to tell you something that might short-circuit every religious idea you've ever had.
4. **Look at that phrase, "for His good pleasure." The word "His" is not in the original Greek which is why in some Bibles it's in italics. A word in italics means that the word does not occur in the original Greek Bible, but the translators added it in to help it make sense.** Translators added it. They *assumed* Paul was talking about God's pleasure... so they added the word "his."
5. And of course we should please God! We exist for his good pleasure.
6. But is that what *this* verse is really about?
  - a) In a passage all about God restoring YOUR dominion and healing YOUR will,
  - b) In a passage that spotlights the ultimate glory of a free will fully on display in the unparalleled life of Jesus Christ...
7. What if God is saying... I am saving you and setting you free so you can do what YOU want. **Your good pleasure.**
  - a) All the good pious Christians are horrified right now! He's a heretic! Pitchforks and torches!
8. So I'll say it again. We exist for his good pleasure and our lives should please him.
9. But I have to ask you is that *all* we exist for? So you're saying our pleasures, our desires, our wants count for nothing? Mean nothing?
  - a) Did God make us to dream and to dare only to knock that out of us?
  - b) The desires of your heart... are they all meant to be buried? Meant to be surrendered?
10. Let's do some serious Bible study here:
  - a) The word for GOOD PLEASURE in this verse is the Greek word *Eudokia*. It means **that which is desirable and wanted by someone.** The desires of your heart. The very thing my buddy Joe couldn't name.
    - (1) I did a study of this word everywhere it happens in the Bible. About 75 percent of the time, it's God's good pleasure. But about 25 percent it's a human's good pleasure.
    - (2) So that's the word "good pleasure." The Greek literally says "the good pleasure."
  - b) So now we have to decide *whose good pleasure?*
    - (1) Guess what percent of Bible translations insert the word His, to make this verse mean God's good pleasure: 100 percent.
    - (2) Guess what percent of Bible commentaries explain that this verse is saying that the biggest thing God wants is for you to do his good pleasure: 100 percent. I could not find a single book, sermon, or commentary that sees this verse any other way.
  - c) I am making a case... and you have decide if I'm successful or not... I am making the case that this verse is not about God's good pleasure; it's about your good pleasure.
  - d) Guess what percent disagrees with me: 100 percent.
    - (1) [In fact, I got this:
      - (a) [No recognized New Testament commentator, Greek grammarian, or major theological dictionary supports interpreting *eudokia* in Philippians 2:13 as the believer's good pleasure apart from God's initiative.
      - (b) [If you are seeking published scholars, commentaries, or theological dictionaries that explicitly teach *eudokia* means solely or primarily "the good pleasure of the believer" and not God, such authorities are simply absent from published academic, patristic, or even popular-level sources
11. You know what I say to that? I'm happy to stand alone.
  - a) **I stand in passionate disagreement with and yes, condemnation of anyone who would so undermine human agency and dominion as to render free will meaningless and to make humans into robots... saying that because we exist for his good pleasure, that leaves no room for my good pleasure or yours.**
  - b) If you say that, you're wrong.
  - c) If you were talking to your child about their dreams and desires, and you said, "What do you want to do with your life?"
    - (1) Imagine them saying, "Well, mom/dad, I only want to do what you want me to do."
    - (2) And you say, "That's very sweet, but I want you to want your wants and dream your dreams and pursue your own desires."
    - (3) And they say, "No, no, no, no, no! I only want what you want me to want."
      - (a) Is that what you want for your kids? Of course not. Are you better toward your children than God is toward his?
12. Since we began this series, I have been preaching one great theme. That the great purpose of God is to heal damaged emotions. And that central to that, it is about the restoration of the will, of dominion, agency, and sovereign self.

13. Do you know what the two most important words are for human free will?
  - a) I CAN.
14. And the title of this whole series?
  - a) Quit telling yourself I can't.
15. And the main verse of this book?
  - a) I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength.
16. And now, we come to 2:13... **look at this:**
  - a) **For it is God who works in you... what's his work?**
  - b) **To will (thelo)... He's healing your will!**
  - c) **And to do... to bring into reality the desires and dreams.**
  - d) The good pleasure... who's good pleasure? Your good pleasure. (Psalm 37:4, John 15:7).
    - (1) [[Ladies and gentlemen of the biblical jury, I argue:
      - (a) [[THEOLOGY: If it was God who gave us dominion... who are you, you Bible expert, to take it away? If it is God who declares that we reign in life (Rom 5:17), by what logic do you deny that reign?
      - (b) [[USAGE, I also argue the Greek supports, this interpretation, and that in this very same book, in Philippians 1:15, *eudokia* is used of human, not divine, free will in a positive sense, and that is the closest reference.
      - (c) [[CONTEXT, is on my side, because healed self-will is the grand output of the work of God in our damaged emotions. The verse says... go expand your territory because God is at work in you both to will (thelo, free will) and to do the pleasing thing."
      - (d) [[TEXT is on my side. The word "His" is simply not in this Greek text.

VI. Conclusion

- A. God loves you too much to let you live forever with the corrupted, self-defeating, self-sabotaging, hyper-religious broken heart you inherited from your dysfunctional past.
  1. He is not trying to crush your will; He is fighting to set it free!
  2. He is restoring your sovereign self, not so you can be His puppet, but so you can have a blast!
  3. So you can be wildly free!
  4. So you can follow your bliss, your desires, your unique wiring, not some spiritualized, pious version of it!
    - a) That's your ground. Quit surrendering it. Go take it back.
- B. For too long, you have been told that your will must be broken for you to be a good Christian. That it's all about surrender. That it's all about dying to self.
- C. **God does not want you to be a weak-willed Christian. He wants you to be a strong-willed Christian whose WILL has been healed, sanctified, and set on fire by His Spirit!**
  1. **Dream Bigger**
  2. **Believe Better**
  3. **Be Bolder**
- D. Don't tell me you're too young; don't tell me you're too old.
  1. In their teens, Mary brought forth Jesus and David crushed Goliath.
  2. In their 20s Daniel and his friends won the herts of Babylon
  3. In their 30s, 40s, and 50s Joseph went from Prisoner to Prince of Egypt and Nehemiah rebuilt a city
  4. In his 60s, Paul wrote his letters from prison and won over an empire.
  5. In their 70s, Abraham and Sarah went to a place they'd never been before so in their 90s they could birth a dynasty.
  6. In his 80s, Moses set his people free and at 85 Caleb pointed to a military map and said, "Give me that mountain.
  7. In his 90s, John received his vision and wrote the Revelation of King Jesus while in exile on an island.
- E. So I am telling you right now, in the name of the King who won your freedom:
  1. Have ambition.
  2. Want your wants.
  3. Pursue your desires.
  4. Wear your crown.
    - a) Cash in the retirement and go preach Christ in the Philippines with Larry Humber or in Nepal with Gyan Pantha.
    - b) Quit the safe job and build the business that takes new ground for the common good and the eternal gospel.
    - c) Write the screenplay, record the album, paint the canvas that tells the truth you're burning to tell.
    - d) Take the pain from your past and start the ministry that brings healing to the broken.
    - e) Go back to school. Ask for that date. Get to that 12 step group.
    - f) Turn down the 'sensible' career path and go all-in on the calling that sets your soul on fire.
  5. GET YOUR HUSTLE BACK!
  6. WAKE. YOUR. SPIRIT. UP!
- F. So I'm going to end where I began. I'm going to ask you the same question I asked my friend Joe.
  1. What. Do. YOU. Want?
- G. I hereby anoint you, I knight you, to dream bigger and believe bigger because I promise you'll discover a God who is better than you ever thought and a life better than you ever imagined it could be.

VII. Prayer

- A. King Jesus,
- B. Victor over all, I stand over your people and declare an end to the era of surrendered ground.
- C. Right now, in Your mighty name, I command the religious lies that have told them their will is bad and their desires are dirty to be shattered and silenced.
  1. Breathe life on the dead dreams in this room.
  2. Awaken a bold ambition.
  3. Heal their 'volition.'
  4. Restore their crown.
- D. Send them out of this place not as safe, timid souls, but as dangerous, strong-willed warriors who know their authority. Let them face their giants and take their mountains. Amen.