

Hebrews (Part Fourteen): Chapter 2, A Mind Bending Purpose (Part Three)

John W. Ritenbaugh (1932-2023)
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It has been a while since a single line of Scripture has impacted me to the extent as John 15:5 has. This is the line which Jesus states, "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, the same brings forth much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing." He is clearly stating the level of His importance to us if we are being saved by God, even out of His mercy. He is clearly stating that if we desire salvation into the Kingdom of God, we had better be maintaining a relationship with Jesus Christ. Otherwise, we produce no fruit.

Now, there is nothing difficult to understand about the main point of what He dogmatically stated. I think we understand that He is not given to bragging about what He dogmatically stated. And I think we understand about His responsibilities to the Father. But that thought eventually led me to yet another revelation to my flawed thinking as I thought about where the need for Him by me arises.

Well, perhaps you might be carrying the same flaw. I remember that when I was a boy attending the Methodist Church, every so often we would sing a hymn titled, "What a Friend We Have in Jesus." That led to another thought that states, "A friend when you're in need is a friend indeed." Now, the song was one of thanksgiving listing a number of trials one might have borne and believed that Jesus relieves us of some of the weight of those burdens.

It was not a strong intention to give thanks for those things, but recently, what I believe is a much broader statement of belief regarding Jesus and His burdens and His helps that He renders to us. This too entails His involvement in our lives. When you think of Jesus as being our Savior, in what category of His many responsibilities to the Father as our High Priest do you think of Him as having?

This is one perhaps everyone will at least get partly correct. The answer to that question is right in Hebrews 1:3 where it states, "when He had by Himself purged our sins, and sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high." As our Savior from those sins of the past as we were coming to conversion, is the way that we tend to first think of Him. I am not saying that everybody does this, but I think that it is one that is held by many, and that is indeed good.

However, we also need to think of Him as having never stopped being our Friend and Savior because our lives and the tragedies of our sins have never completely stopped. He has never abandoned us during that entire period of time. His presence as our Friend is constant because He cares. Now, let me show you another way how deeply He cares.

I mentioned to you in the sermon I gave at last year's Feast of Tabernacles, how going through this period of time with Evelyn bearing the dementia (or Alzheimer's disease, whichever it is that she has, we are unsure of what she has, but neither of them is truly curable through a normal end of life, though a normal end of life dementia tends to be less severe than Alzheimer's), but regardless, Evelyn has been rendered virtually helpless by this affliction. Our question is, why?

Well, a major reason is because she has not lost only her memories, which is bad enough all by itself, but she has also lost the power of cogent speech. She can say a few words here and there, but that is about it. Now, from this I have learned something about Christ that I can no longer just toss off understanding something more of the range of Jesus feelings for His creations—us—than I did before having to deal with Evelyn's almost utter helplessness.

I learned this from her. When I talk to her, she does not really understand what I am saying. And even though I am saying it to her for her very well being, it comes very close to the literal fact that I am speaking a language different from what she spoke all of her life. I want to compare this with Jesus and I want to begin with you in the gospel of John, chapter 1, verses 9 through 11, just to show you a little bit about what Jesus had to deal with almost constantly.

John 1:9-11 That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him.

Let us turn to another scripture, just hanging on to that thought that He was not received by the very people that He made possible to have life.

Luke 13:31-33 On that very day some Pharisees came, saying to Him, "Get out and depart from here, for Herod wants to kill You." And He said to them, "Go tell that fox, 'Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected.' Nevertheless I must journey today, tomorrow, and the day following; for it cannot be that a prophet should perish outside of Jerusalem."

Listen to this lament remembering what we just read in John the first chapter:

Luke 13:34-35 "O Jerusalem. Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you were not willing! See! Your house is left to you desolate; and assuredly, I say to you, you shall not see Me until the time comes when you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!'"

Now, even though Jesus was aware that His people would reject Him, He could not pass it off as nothing. "Oh well." No, He did not have that kind of an attitude at all.

Do not forget what it says in Romans the first chapter, because Jesus knew very well that God was holding these people, the Romans and everybody else that he was preaching to of this:

Romans 1:19-20 [B]ecause what may be known of God is manifest to them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world, His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by

the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so
that they [meaning mankind] are without excuse.

That was part of the reason why He felt that way about those people. They did not really understand Him, they did not get what He was saying. But at the same time, they were bearing a burden and He felt for them. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem!"

Let us look at another scripture right along this line in John the eighth chapter, We should be fairly familiar with what John 8 is in regard to. But it says there, Jesus asked these people:

John 8:43 "Why do you not understand My speech? [and then He gave them an answer] Because you are not able to listen to My words."

Now, between Evelyn and I the cause of the language barrier because of the circumstances in her in her brain, English has become a foreign language and I am learning that it is a frustrating and saddening experience. She still gets knowledge through her eyes, but her ears, though she knows words here and there, she cannot think it through. In other words, the damage to her brain is not the same as just one of her senses dropping away. It is more than that; and that is the way it was with these people that Jesus dealt with. They could not hear in an understanding way what He was saying to them. They lacked the ability, such as Evelyn has right now that same lack.

She can turn to the scriptures there. She has a hard time finding them, but she does not really know what they say. That is the way it was with Jesus all His life. He was speaking to people of things that are glorious to you and me because we understand them, but they did not; and yet He felt for them. He felt sorry for their inability to be able to comprehend what it was that He was saying because He had the answers to all of their problems.

Let us go to the book of Ephesians 1.

Ephesians 1:7-8 In Him [that is, Jesus Christ] we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence.

Are you beginning to get a picture here? We have things in our minds and we are able to think them through because we have been gifted with whatever it takes to hear Jesus Christ and grasp what He is saying. Now, this part started out with me as to Him being our helper. (Let us put it that way.) What a friend we have in Jesus, who is able to help us with our cares. But He does far more than that. He did not stop with the forgiveness of sins. He instead continued on giving us more and more and more so that we are able to deal with life, growing to the place where we can deal with it as He did. Now, we do not, but we can go in that direction.

Ephesians 1:7-14 In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, that in the dispensation in the fullness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, which are in heaven and which are in the earth—in Him.

In Him we have an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory. In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.

One of the reasons I chose to go through those verses is because this is where we stand with this revelation that is here in Ephesians 1. This is where we now stand before God and man. Man is unaware, but God is very much aware of what has been revealed to us. Now, the unconverted may not be

aware of the seriousness of our position before God as Jesus was. But the Father and the Son are well aware and vitally concerned, because in a major way our lives are now on the line, we have a lot to lose considering what was revealed to us.

Now think about how concerned Jesus was because of the Jews lack in the area of attitude toward Him that we saw in John the eighth chapter. After that verse that we read there, verse 43, they wanted to stone Him because to them He was speaking foolishness. He was blaspheming, according to them. That is how twisted their thoughts were regarding Him here. He was their very Creator who gave them life, gave them the ability to speak, gave them the ability to think, gave them the ability to build things. And when He revealed who He was and some of the things that He revealed, they wanted to stone Him. That is how twisted their thinking was.

The world does not understand that about us. But we need to think about the fact that we need this relationship with Jesus Christ and we need to be developing it with Him because He tells us that without Himself, without Him, we can do nothing. If there is any relationship we need with anybody, it is Him. We have been invited to come to Him through prayer. And I have shown you just a little bit here at the beginning, He cares that this relationship is being developed.

The other side of that coin is that because God has revealed Himself to us through Jesus Christ, our lives are to some degree on the line and we need that relationship. Now, our lives are on the line and if it makes us feel having a bit of a burden, that is good, because it is the burden of the responsibility of the weight of God's truth that has been revealed to us, and some of which we now understand that we are accountable to Them for that.

I want to remind you by means of another reality that I believe that I did not make in my Pentecost sermon. It is one you know and it must not be forgotten. And there is within this a third item that needs to be considered. It is: that God is absolutely in charge of the operation and timing of His purposes being worked out. All events within His purpose unfold and occurs as He directs. It is important to understand that.

How do you know that He is not going to pull the plug on you? He can do that at any given time.

Now, we will make this more positive as we go along here. But I think that we might think as small and unimportant as we are to God's purpose, it is not important. Do you think you are nothing? But look, you have been called and brethren, that is important! Maybe the most important gift you have ever been given in your life. By giving that calling, He makes us responsible for hearing Him and hearing His Son and acting upon these gifts that He is giving to us. And that is why I say our lives are on the line in a way the lives of people in the world are not, because they do not have an understanding of God's Word.

You may not think very often of the fact that your calling was given to you (that came just a little bit earlier in the book of Ephesians there), but you have been predestined to be called. So what God predestined He has carried it out in your life and in my life. And the thing that I said just a few a minutes or so earlier, is that God is in control of everything that happens. In other words, you were called because God pushed the button for you to begin to understanding. So what I want you to do is make every effort never to forget that you are called. God did not make a mistake. He did not slip up, it was done with purpose. He looked (we will put it this way) at what was available on earth that pleased Him to give the calling, and He gave it.

I want to give you a little pattern here and show you what I have just said is true; and we will begin with one we are all aware of. First of all, it was God who sought out Abraham. He called him too, opened up his mind. And as far as we know, Abram was nothing outstanding in this world. He was not an ruler of men, nor an eminently successful businessman, nor educator. And who knows how many God may have included in any process of elimination as He scanned the earth with His eyesight and decided that this is one that I want. It was God who chose Abram.

Nonetheless, it is God who sought out a covenant with him, taking the calling a little bit further. It was God who determined where He was going to place the progeny that was going to come from Abram, and He did it. And I think we ought to look at that just to see the proof of it. I will not turn to the

scripture in Exodus, but I will turn to the scripture in the book of Amos, in chapter 3, verse 2. It states there very clearly that God did not make a covenant with any other group of people than those who are the progeny of Abraham.

And then it was God who determined where to place the small nation of Abraham and that is in the book of Exodus. It makes it very clear. He gave them a unique geographical position it held in world affairs both anciently and where Abram's progeny is right up to this very present. That is, most of them are in Northwest Europe, the United States, we will call them the Israelite nations around the world.

This simply-stated process helps stamp God's pattern of how He does things. Brethren, He leads and He follows through on His purposes regarding the process.

Ezekiel 20:2-11 Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying, "Son of man, speak to the children of Israel, and say to them, 'Thus says the Lord God: "Have you come to inquire of Me? As I live," says the Lord God, "I will not be inquired of by you."' Will you judge them, son of man, will you judge them? Then make known to them the abominations of their fathers. Say to them, 'Thus says the Lord God: "On the day when I chose Israel and raised My hand in an oath to the descendants of the house of Jacob, and made Myself known to them in the land of Egypt, I raised My hand in an oath to them, saying, 'I am the Lord your God.' On that day I raised My hand in an oath to them, to bring them out of the land of Egypt into a land that I had searched out for them, 'flowing with milk and honey,' the glory of all lands.

And then I said to them, 'Each of you, throw away the abominations which are before your eyes, and do not defile yourself with the idols of Egypt. I am the Lord, your God.' But they rebelled against Me and would not obey Me. They did not all cast away the abominations which were before their eyes, nor did they forsake the idols of Egypt. Then I said, 'I will pour out My fury on them and fulfill My anger against them in the midst of the land of Egypt.' But I acted for My name's sake, that it should not be

profaned before the Gentiles among whom they were, in whose sight I made Myself known to bring them, to bring them out of the land of Egypt. Therefore I made them go out of the land of Egypt and brought them into the wilderness. And gave them My statues and showed them My judgments, 'which, if a man does, he shall even live by them.'"

Now, I said that God called Abraham and God also gave Abraham some of His truth and God made a covenant with Him. God then put them into a land where He wanted them. So what I am trying to help you to understand is that God is the Creator and God follows through on His creation and expands what He originally began. Brethren, there is no such thing that I "call the whomsoever wills may come to God," because God is the One who operates everything from His throne in heaven. And He follows through and keeps following through until He has succeeded in achieving what it is He wants to accomplish. He does not have to guess, He does not have to experiment, because He knows the end from the beginning.

We find in the book of John, the 14th chapter, verses 7 through 12, another step in what I am hoping to fulfill here with this subject. Jesus says,

John 14:7-12 "If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; from now on you know Him and have seen Him." And Philip said to Him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us." Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Phillip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority, but the Father who dwells in Me does the works. Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works. Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father."

There is a reason that God does things the way He does. He initiates and He carries through.

Now, what I wanted to make sure of in John 14 here is that Jesus made sure that this principle that I gave to you that God creates and God carries through on the creating. And Jesus made sure that this governing and operating principle was drilled into the apostles' minds.

Prior to this time, in this context, in the transfiguration God commanded Peter, James, and John to hear the Son, meaning "Hear Him!" that is, Jesus Christ, in deference to all others. That too is part of the directing aspect of this pattern that I began with God calling Abram. Now, here is more support. We are going to go back to the book of Ephesians in chapter 1 again, because I want to support this, that you are called and you are responsible to take care of that calling, but God is the Creator. I am heading for something here.

Ephesians 1:3-8 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace, which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence.

What I want to get across here is that there is an overall reason why God Himself carries through on the plans that He institutes, and of course He does pass them on to Jesus Christ and gives Him His responsibilities within them.

I want us to turn here to John, the 17th chapter. God is responsible for creation. He creates and He carries through with what He creates. We might say that He even oversees Jesus Christ in this. In John the 17th chapter (something that we are quite familiar with because we have touched on it so many different times), a reason is provided as to why He does it. He is following a pattern that others who create, even human beings, follow through as well. This is a practical reason why He does it, and having worked in this kind of work, I can understand it.

John 17:20-23 [this is Jesus' prayer] "I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me."

Right there is an answer of why God does things in the way that He does, that He follows through with His calling. He also follows through with what He creates and He carries it out and uses it until it is completed. In other words, He continues to direct the operations that He is underway with now.

There is an overall reason: it is that God is following this process because it works. And it works in a practical nuts and bolts way toward producing unity of conduct and judgment in His Family and His purpose. His purpose works to produce the family way, the God Family way that Adam and Eve, among all humans, were the first to deviate from the principle in this command which is in I Corinthians 11. The apostle under the inspiration of God says to the congregation there in Corinth,

I Corinthians 11:1 Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.

The principle in this command is direct and it is to the point. We do learn from each other. And this is nonetheless tied to the overall reason God does things in this manner. It is really a very simple process. God creates, and then God, the Creator, follows through on the very things that He created to make sure that they turn out exactly the way that He wants them to turn out. That is why I said, it is a simple process, but it works.

Now, what we are seeing here is this process where Paul is carrying it out as well under the inspiration of God. And he tells the people in the congregation to "imitate me." It is, in a sense, the same way of saying, do things the way I do them, just as I also imitate Christ.

I Corinthians 11:2 Now I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all the things and keep the traditions just as I have delivered them to you.

So, two of the major reasons that He does His operations in this way (it is a simple process) is that they produce unity and continuity of standards of conduct, and quality of choices.

There is one more thought that I would like to see us carry the right understanding on because we use the phrase (I have done it, I do not know how many times, myself), about building character as if somehow or another we were doing the creating. Now I have gone through all this to let you know that God is the Creator. All we do is yield to what He says to do, but He is doing the creating; the Father and the Son do that.

I want us to go back all the way to Genesis the first chapter, verses that we are very familiar with. But here is where the process actually gets its start.

Genesis 1:26-27 Then God said [to the Son], "Let Us make man in Our image [you see who is initiating things], according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, over the cattle, over the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

Genesis 1:26-27 clearly identifies God as the Creator. He started the process. It is very clear that Adam and Eve, who were created, did not create themselves. That is such a simple thing. In fact, they added absolutely nothing to what the Father and Son did entirely on their own, until after they were living, breathing creatures. After that, it was almost all downhill when they started adding to the creation.

This is why I am stressing it. We have to let God do what He wants to do. He knows where He is headed. He knows that He can create mankind in Their image, the Father and Son's image. We cannot do that at all. We cannot add any more to the creation that is going on in us than Adam and Eve could to their creation. We have to be made by somebody else who knows what they are doing.

So what is it that we do in this process? We just yield and go to where God says. That is it. That is our portion of the creation. But we do not create

godly character anymore than Adam and Eve created human character. Now we see a good indication there that when they started adding to what they were, they started downhill from what God made them.

Let us go all the way back to the New Testament again, this time in II Corinthians.

II Corinthians 5:14-17 For the love of Christ compels us [moves us along], because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again. Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh, even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer. Therefore [here is the verse I am heading toward], if anyone is in Christ [Now, do you believe that you are in Christ? You should because that is a right destination], he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

When we were converted during God's calling, a new creation of the kind, of the quality, and the thoroughness only the Father and Son are able to perform, has begun. You cannot create a spirit being. I cannot create a spirit being. How much do I know about spirit life? Almost zilch. How are we going to create when we say that we are creating character? How do we know that the designer—God—is going in the same direction as we are? We do not, no more than Adam and Eve did. They did not know that at all.

So what are we doing? We are learning to yield to the pressures that God puts on us, to move us, to motivate us to go, as it were, with our thinking in the direction that He wants us to go. And this is a major reason why we need the relationship with Christ. We are supposed to create fruit that glorifies God. How do we do that?

Now, we can do things that glorify God, but we are not creating it. They are the ones who are manipulating us so that we go in the direction He wants us to go. And if we are compliant to the Father and the Son, we will move in that direction in our thinking and application of the skills that we have.

Let us go to John the third chapter. This is the born again verse.

John 3:3 Jesus answered and he said to him [Nicodemus], "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

Jesus spoke to Nicodemus in terms of a brand new birth different from the birth in which he came out of his mother's womb, that is, Nicodemus, and it completely threw Nicodemus for a loop intellectually. So Jesus spoke in terms to Nicodemus of a brand new birth. But Jesus' thought was on a spiritual birth and this is the reason why John 6:44 is in the Bible, in that Jesus stated regarding that birth, everybody that comes to Him must first be drawn by the Father. The Father initiates the new birth by calling the person. (I wrote a note here.) It says, one must pass God's review first before He passes us on to Somebody else within the Family to begin and move the process.

Now, here is an obvious reason why the creation has to be designed and created by God, even though we have a role to play within the creation. Our role is simply to yield to what God directs. And that is hard enough! But if we do that, we will be in agreement with the direction that God is heading in and the creation will continue.

Back to I Corinthians 13, verses 9 to 12. This is a part of the mystery of our development in the creation.

I Corinthians 13:9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part.

What is the apostle saying? He is asking the question, how much do we really know? We know virtually nothing about spirit and spirit life. How are we going to create spiritual character? It has to be done by Someone who is expert in doing it. A real artist. I am talking about God. We only know in part and we prophesy in part, Paul said. In a way, we are nothing but dumbbells in terms of spiritual things.

I Corinthians 13:10-11 But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away. When I was a child

[he is showing a process here], I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things.

Put into that our growth in the Family of God. There are periods of growth that we have to go through. But even when we are grown enough to be converted and changed into spirit, we still will not be doing the creating. That is going to be left up to the Father and the Son.

I gave the subject of my sermon on Pentecost largely for one reason, I do not think that I stated it very clearly. And that was to hopefully trigger motivating thoughts in your mind of admiration and appreciation for Jesus Christ and His quality and level of leadership. Now, why admiration and why appreciation? It is because, whether you understand it or not, those two qualities are strong, motivating influences toward our imitating Him.

To admire means "to regard with approval and respect," and that is good. But it does not quite have the effect, the punch, as it were, that appreciation does on our thinking and therefore on our actions. To appreciate adds a stronger emotional quality than admiration. It is easily possible for to admire a person's skill at doing something and do not appreciate that same skilled person as a person because of personality and character issues. Appreciate carries with it a stronger sense of valuing. It means "to value," "to esteem highly," including even with sensitivity. Appreciation results from carefully evaluating a wide spectrum of characteristics against others with similar traits. And it carries a great deal more thoughtful carrying impact than admiration.

And despite all the displays of human leadership we see or hear about within the multitude of disciplines of human achievements made in all the history of mankind's existence, whether from personal conversations, books, newspapers, radio, television, entertainment, politics, or by means of the electronic media, or any other means of communicating news that might motivate us to communicate with others about that leadership, absolutely *nobody* possesses the quality leadership of Jesus Christ.

Jesus, as the apostle John described him in John 1, is unique in all of history. We need, again brethren, I want to remind you, we need a relationship with

Him; a speaking relationship with Him through prayer. Now, He looked as a man, just like all men, but *nobody* has ever conducted themselves like Him. Did you ever pause from your daily life activities to consider that this is the very reason why the author of the epistle to the Hebrews (that I personally believe was the apostle Paul), wrote what he did in the manner that he did in Hebrews 1?

Now consider this, that he began the epistle metaphorically with a huge, what amounted to metaphorically, a huge verbal thunder clap. It would have been similar if a weather storm thunderclap occurred on a sunny cloudless day, both unexpectedly and frighteningly, right out of the blue, but aimed at gaining the Jews attention. And that is why that group of noted writing evaluators voted Hebrews 1 as the most meaningful and arresting opening chapter ever written in history. I read that when I was probably a teenager, but you can see it has stuck with me. Because these men out of the world, they were not preachers or anything, but they still said the book of Hebrews has the most arresting first chapter ever written in the history of man.

Boom! "What do you mean you don't think that He is qualified to be High Priest? He created you. He created the whole world. He lived without sin." He really hit them with a haymaker, right to the chin, because their disagreement with Jesus as High Priest was resolved before Hebrews 1:3 ever began. It was that opening that did it, with some help from God, to lay it on their minds.

So regarding leadership, the unique Jesus, as the apostle John correctly portrayed Him, is at the very pinnacle of the most important category in all of life. And that category is conduct, behavior. His is the very highest of all, at the most important category of all, always displaying love. Do you both admire and appreciate Him enough that you know what He means to you, that you will talk with Him and advance a relationship with Him?

I am not talking about merely being politely thankful or pleased, even though that is a very good start, because of what He personally did for us. But are we motivated to imitate Him, just like Paul said in I Corinthians 11, "Imitate me, as I imitate Jesus." That is what he said. And this is one reason why God has a church because we do learn from each other if we will communicate with each other civilly and take care of really, truly loving one another.

There are two books in the Bible that I have to confess to you that have truly captivated my attention during my time in the church. And they are Ecclesiastes in the Old Testament and Hebrews in the New. Neither has really captivated my attention to merely search for details, trivia information, even though it might be beneficial for me. What grabbed my attention is what the authors said in the overall telling of his story.

Ecclesiastes teaches me to be truly serious about life, more serious than I otherwise would have been, because Solomon's general overall theme is teaching me that in life, *everything matters* to some degree. That is quite a thought—everything matters. So do not let life pass by, and in that life, make sure you are using your relationship with Jesus Christ.

So if I did not hold to this understanding and truly pay attention to this significant reality, life absolutely will for me, because I know the way I am, become nothing but vanity, because I will allow my mind to be less focused to a significant degree. And if I do, my hope therefore is that God will gently prod me to go in the right direction.

What is it that the book of Hebrews teaches me? I will pass that on to you too. Simply stated, what the apostle Paul writing in that book is showing everybody that reads it: The reader must carry the ball. The weight is on the reader to do what Paul wrote. That is why the so-called writing evaluators say it is the most exhortative book in the Bible. It has more sections of exhortation to get *busy* and do what needs to be done.