

Well, good morning. It's good to be here. You can respond, by the way. All right, just, just checking up.

You alive? I know it's kind of that time of the semester, as just was mentioned. Hang in there. I've been in your shoes. I understand what it's like, particularly when you start heading to finals. And so just encourage you to ask God to give you some strength and to clarify, clear your mind, and I guess drink some coffee, whatever you need to do. But I want to talk to you this morning from just a text that we all know. You see it on the screen there, 2 Corinthians chapter 5, verses 9 to 20. And I'm not going to read all those verses, but I'm going to highlight some things from that text because of time this morning.

But let me ask you a question, and it's kind of a— it's a penetrating question, and it's quite personal, but what really motivates you?

Well, before I start, let me just mention, by the way, Word of Life We're based up in New York— actually, not so much based there anymore. We've got bases all over the world. But right now God is just blessing in tremendous ways. We still need some help this summer, by the way. Let me just mention that too, at our camps. We have a brand new camp in California, not too far away from Sonora, and San Francisco, San Jose needs some help out there this summer. And then also up in New York, and then down in Tampa, Florida, and of course all over the world.

So if you have any interest, You can send me an email at donljr—

that's D-O-N-L-J-R— @wol.org. So W-O-L dot O-R-G. And I'd love to have your help this summer with counseling, just all sorts of needs we still have as we're looking at the summer ahead. But our goal at Word of Life is we want to see every young person take their next step with Jesus Christ. It might be a first step in trusting Christ as Savior, and we see a lot of that happening. In fact, we had a month last year it was the month of April, actually, where we had this big— April and May— this big evangelistic push. And we saw about 120,000 people come to Christ in one month. And so praise God for that. And so our team is really stepping up now in 91 countries, 117 locations, and we're just thankful for what God is doing. But as you think about this text here this morning and think about this theme, what really motivates you? If we're really honest with ourselves, we would recognize that many times our motivation— I'll speak for myself—

is to please me, to make myself happy, to make myself feel good. We also kind of get into the mode of pleasing other people, people pleasers.

You might be motivated, and hopefully you are, at finishing out your education, even getting through this year.

That's great.

You need to. You may be thinking about a career, finding a good-paying job, getting married. I don't know what your motivation is right now. And let me just say, these can all be good things if that is what God actually wants.

But for those of us who are followers of Jesus Christ, our motivation is actually quite different from our world and sometimes the things that we get caught up into. There's one motivation that really must supersede everything else. And you find that right here in this text.

The Apostle Paul makes it very clear in 2 Corinthians 5:9.

And here's what the Word of God says: "Therefore," he says, "we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to him." And so Paul's ultimate motivation was to be found acceptable and pleasing to Jesus Christ. And so as you read a verse like that, this is God's Word, it's God speaking to us, and so you recognize, okay, so if that's Paul's motivation and God is speaking to me here today, this needs to be my motivation as well. Every word, every action, every thought pleasing Jesus Christ.

Now the word here in this verse, at least the version I'm using, aim or ambition, that brings the idea of aspiration, kind of striving towards something.

In fact, as I thought about that again this morning, you probably were asked the question as a young child, you know, what do you want to be?

Well, right now the big deal is I want to be an astronaut or something like that.

And so we have these dreams and people quiz us about that as children. What is your ambition? What is your aspiration?

I love the story of a young mom. She was actually a medical doctor. And she had a young daughter, she was like 3, 4 years old. And the mom had very high aspirations and ambitions for her daughter. She was like, "I hope she grows up to be just like me." And so she was taking her little daughter to preschool one day, and on the way to preschool, the doctor, this young woman, had left her stethoscope back near the car seat. And so as you can imagine, they're driving down the road and the little daughter picks it up and puts it on. And the mom looked back in the rearview mirror like, "What?

This is incredible. My daughter wants to be just like me. Look, she's wearing the stethoscope." And she was so excited that she heard her daughter say these words, and I quote, "Welcome to McDonald's, may I take your order?" Kind of blew that out of the water, right?

You know, you and I can have the aspiration and ambition to do lots of things, but the passion of our hearts must be over everything else to please Jesus Christ. So you say, "Oh, I know that." You know, you've heard that in other chapels, I'm sure. And, you know, whenever you read a verse like this, I have a professor, Howard Hendricks at Dallas Seminary, he always used to stop and say, "Okay, class, so what?

What do we do with this? Where do we go from here?" And you have to ask that question repeatedly of the Word of God. And so as you think about that, the question that I ask is I kind of pepper the text with questions. So how do I stay motivated then to keep my focus on pleasing Christ?

Because honestly, dear students, as you walk through life, as things happen, as you're sitting in class— I remember being in school and working 3 jobs at the same time once just to try to keep going and keep moving forward.

It's not easy. And so in the midst of that, how do you keep your focus and your motivation on pleasing Jesus Christ?

That's really the loaded question for me.

And so as you begin to read this text, 2 Corinthians chapter 5, there's some things that literally fall right out of the text.

There's 3 things here. That help us to stay focused on pleasing Jesus Christ every single minute of the day. And these have helped me tremendously. Very simple. But number one, if you're taking notes, write this down. Pretty important.

We know it.

But number one, we all have received an appointment with Jesus Christ.

And so if you're a follower of Jesus Christ, you have this appointment. Look at verse 10 of this text, 2 Corinthians chapter 5. It says, for we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body according to what he has done, whether good or bad. So the Apostle Paul, he knew, and he makes it very clear here, that someday he would stand before Jesus as really— it's what's called the judgment seat of Christ. It was a required appointment. And

notice the words. It's not, I must appear. He uses the plural pronoun here, "We must all appear." He's writing here to the Corinthians. We're all showing up for this. There's no skipping this appointment.

Now, if you're like me, sometimes I have a dental appointment or a, you know, physical, annual physical, and what happens often, you start to get texts and at least where I live, we get a lot of phone calls, sometimes 3, 4 in a day for the same appointment. I don't know what they're thinking.

But the calls go like this. There's these automatic phone calls, kind of a robotic voice on the other end.

They want me to confirm that I'm going to be there for this appointment.

They say—

actually, as they call, there's usually a long delay, and then they mangle my last name, which some people actually do. Some people say "Lough" or "Lug," but it's actually "Lock." So after this long pause, you get into this lengthy recording. Where they typically will say something like, you know, "Press 3 to confirm. Press 2 if you desire to reschedule. Press 3 if you don't care." You know, there's all these different options that you have.

But here's how I want you to think about this text, because once again, God is speaking to us. When it comes to the judgment seat of Christ, think of verse 10, because it really is God's recorded message to me and to you. And so let's make it personal. I'll personalize it for me. Don Locke, Cairn University students and staff and faculty, for you must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that you may receive the things done in the body according to what you've done, whether good or bad. No need to press 1.

You'll be there.

Click. That's it. You will be there. Now, the judgment seat of Christ, as you probably know, is for believers, and so it's not a question question mark as to whether or not you're saved as you appear before Christ.

Your salvation is not in question, but it's going to be a moment when each one of us as believers will stand before Christ to give an account.

So think about this for a minute. Our lives, our heart motives, and our works since salvation will be revealed.

I remember standing I was actually in Corinth and standing before what was the judgment seat of Christ where Paul stood. And I remember standing there and just thinking, "Whew." This is, you know, you kind of look up and it's kind of elevated above you there, like, "This is going to be crazy.

Me by myself standing in front of Jesus Christ and just this evaluation of my motives and my heart." As I think about the judgment seat of Christ, I believe it's going to be a place of revelation.

Our lives, as we talked about, will be laid completely bare, our hearts and our motives, as I mentioned. I think it's also going to be a place of regret.

I know there's no tears in heaven, I fully understand that, and we're not going to be condemned, but I believe there's going to be some remorse and regret for what could have been. Say, "What are you talking about?" You know, why didn't I talk to my neighbor about the good news of Jesus Christ? Why didn't I step up in my local church? Why wasn't I a better example as a believer in my dorm, in my home, in my neighborhood? Why didn't I love people more?

And so perhaps some regret as we stand before Christ, but it's also going to be a place of reward, right? And hopefully you're going to hear, and I'm going to hear, "Well done, good and faithful servant." One of the greatest concerns— and here I am serving in ministry for many years now— but one of the

greatest concerns I have 'Cause I can get involved in a lot of stuff, a lot of things. Is I don't wanna waste my life.

I don't want you to waste your life. It's serving Jesus, pleasing him. And I wanna be found faithful. And just to recognize, how do we stay on course? How do we keep this focus of pleasing Christ every day, every moment of the day? By remembering that someday you're gonna stand before him. We all have.

An appointment with Jesus Christ. Number 2, number 2, we've also received the second thing here, the affection and love of Jesus Christ. Let your eyes glance over to verses 14 and 15.

It says, for the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus, that if one died for all, then all died. But he died for all, that those who live —don't miss this—should no longer live for themselves. That's what, that's what our tendency is—for him who died for them and rose again.

Now, to be very clear here, Paul's not talking about our love for Jesus Christ. And of course we need to have that, but he's talking about Christ's love for us. If you really begin to think about this, your whole life and my whole life has been transformed by the affection and love of Jesus Christ. We know the story.

We just had Easter. But even though we didn't deserve it— we don't deserve anything except judgment because of our sin— but even though we didn't deserve it, what did Jesus do? He said, "I'm gonna give up my life for you anyway." Even though you're a sinner, it says in Romans, Christ died for you. So as you think about what Jesus Christ did in that incredible demonstration of love, That should be incredibly motivating. In fact, the word here, compels, in the text is actually— it's interesting, sometimes we think that, you know, kind of drives us forward, and that maybe could be a meaning. But as you get into the text here, it's more the idea of the love of Christ restricts us, it keeps us in check.

And Christ's sacrificial love for us keeps us focused and in check on pleasing him. You say, "How do you make that even clearer?" Well, I was thinking this morning again about my dad, who's now been with Jesus for, I think, 21 years. But I remember as a young boy, there were many times when I was tempted by friends or even my own heart to do the wrong thing. You know the one thing that kept me from doing those things, that kind of held me in check? It was knowing that I didn't want to disappoint my dad and knowing that he loved me.

And so the love of my dad in many ways kept me from doing what I shouldn't do.

Now, our motivation should go beyond that, but as a little child, that's how I was thinking.

But how much more should the love of Christ compel us and keep us from doing the things that do not please him? We don't deserve anything, and that should change your whole perspective in life, that he loves us regardless. And the love of Christ keeps us focused on pleasing him. And so we've all received an appointment with Christ, we've received the affection and love of Christ.

Let me give you one last one here this morning. We've received an assignment from Christ. Maybe you haven't thought about this before. It's a very familiar verse. You say, "Assign for what?" Look down at verse 20. Paul writes this, one of my favorite verses, a great reminder: Now then, We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.

One of the things that kind of jumps out of this text for me is notice again the pronoun that Paul uses here.

He doesn't say, hey, I alone am an ambassador.

This is not a pride moment here. He's saying, no, we are ambassadors for Christ. We are all in this together. Students, it doesn't matter who you are, where you're from, where you're going, you have to

understand something. You are an ambassador for Christ. It's not an optional assignment that you can just blow off.

As I think about this assignment, as you begin to dwell on this text here, some things kind of jump out at me as you begin to understand historical context and all that. But number one, Being an ambassador for Christ is a very significant assignment and role. In fact, in Paul's day, an ambassador was really considered a very high position, very responsible position, maybe the most responsible in some people's eyes, because an ambassador was sent by the king or by the ruler.

We still have this even today. An ambassador sent out from the United States to go to some foreign land, and, and really what they say and what they do reflects back on the ruler, the president, the king of that country. Everything they say and do reflects back. They speak for that king in that country.

It's a very significant assignment. Back some years ago, I travel— I've been in Brazil in recent weeks and different places like that, but I had the privilege of going to West Africa. I was flying to Ghana to be with our team there. It was a direct flight, I think, from Newark, and so flew directly over there to Accra. And if you get to know me, when I travel, like when I'm going to Dallas tomorrow, I kind of dress down. I may wear shorts, I may wear sweats and a t-shirt, and I just like to be— particularly overnight flights, I want to be comfortable so I can sleep. You know, some people sleep in suits and jackets and ties. That's great, but that's just not me. And so there I am on this plane, and I'm pretty relaxed. I forget what I'm in, jeans and a t-shirt or something. And we landed the plane there in Accra in Ghana, and I'm excited to be there, but, you know, a little tired. I've been traveling overnight, and so you're a little sleepy, hair's a mess. I had a lot more hair at that time. And so I, as I was seated there in the very back of the plane, and so we get, try to get the least expensive tickets at Word of Life, so I'm sitting back by the bathroom, maybe even in the bathroom, who knows.

I was way where it stinks and everything. It's really bad. So anyway, I'm back there. And we land the plane, and I was very surprised because the captain says over the intercom, he says, "Ladies and gentlemen, we have a very special person, a VIP on this flight." Now, there are hundreds of people. This is a big, like a big overseas plane here, pretty large jet, a Boeing. And so I land, I'm in the seat, and I'm like, "Who is here? Like with a politician or something or with a movie star?"

You know, who's on this plane?" I'm wondering. And they said—

the captain said, "We'd like everyone to remain seated because we'd like to introduce this very special person and have them come to the front." And they suddenly called my name. I thought, "What is going on?" And so they called my name and they said, "We're so glad to have you." They gave me the red carpet, like incredible treatment, a red carpet out the door, the military saluting me. They never checked my passport, never checked— I just literally walked into the country with all this VIP treatment. And I found out that our field director there had this very high connection in the government. He said, "I want to give Don Locke this presidential treatment." And I was like, "I wish every trip would go like this." I was just a young leader at that time, like, "This is really cool.

I mean, it's almost like I'm the President of the United States of America." And then you read a text like this.

Yeah, that'd be a lot of fun. I haven't had a trip like that ever since. But can you imagine?

As you think about the Creator of the universe, the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords, that you represent him. I mean, that— isn't that awesome?

We represent the King of Kings, the one who is sovereign over all. It's a very significant assignment, and you're sent by him to represent him on this earth, right here in this area, Langhorne, Pennsylvania.

Everywhere you go, wah-wah, wherever it is, you represent Christ.

What an amazing assignment, right? Number 2, I want you to recognize as well, it's your primary

assignment. Being an ambassador for Christ, in my view, as you look at Scripture, it seems to supersede anything else that you're doing or hope to do. So I don't care what your major is here. You might be in mathematics or headed to medical school or construction or accounting, whatever it might be, art. On and on it goes, and that's great. But the way you need to look at that, wherever God places you, you are really supposed to leverage that for the sake of Christ. You're representing him.

You're sharing the good news about Jesus. Every place you are, that's what you're supposed to do. This is your assignment. This is the number one thing that you do.

I wanna remind you as well that number three, it's an urgent assignment. It's an urgent assignment. See, where do you get that? Well, I want you to recognize we're on an urgent mission with an urgent message from God. Look again at verse 20.

It says this: We're ambassadors for Christ— don't miss these words— as though God were— what does it say?— pleading through us. We implore you, or we beg you, on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.

You know, my prayer list every week I have some days of the week where I pray specifically for unsaved neighbors and friends and people in my town, people that I know. And every time I pray that and I read a verse like this, I'm like, when is the last time I've begged one of those people to come to Christ?

Now I know we need to be careful, we need to be diplomatic and all that, but when is the last time I really just like laid it out there like, look, this is a matter of heaven and hell. What is your choice? And we need to be thinking about this because people are dying and they have no idea that they're headed to hell. Don't have a clue. And what are we doing about it? You're an ambassador for Jesus Christ. It is time to step up. And that's part of pleasing Jesus Christ. We cannot live our lives, even though we feel like we need to take care of ourselves and please other people, you can't live that way.

Your focus must be, your motivation must be to please Jesus Christ. You may not know, I'm a musician by trade. I play the piano, a vocalist and all that, played concerts over the years, and so I kind of like classical music, and that was really kind of my area. And so I picked up a few months ago a story about a young violinist who was giving a concert. And when he finished, the crowd just— I mean, the concert was amazing. The crowd just jumped to their feet, gave him a standing ovation. He had delivered a magnificent performance. And the young violinist, as he saw the crowd, he began to have tears flow down his cheeks. And he actually walked off the stage very dejected. Well, there was a stagehand in the back who saw him. He's like, "Why in the world are you sad, man?"

This is ridiculous. I mean, 2,000 people on their feet clapping for you. They want you back." "Come back for more. People are going crazy out there. I don't understand." And the young violinist told the stagehand, he said, "Do you see that one man in the center of the auditorium down there?"

Do you notice he's still seated?" Stagehand said, "Yeah, so what?"

There are 2,000 other people on their feet, man. They're still applauding us even now. They want you back for an encore." He said, "That's true, but you don't understand because that man that's still seated in the middle of the auditorium is my dad.

He's also my violin teacher, and if he doesn't stand up, it doesn't matter what 2,000 other people are doing. He is the one that matters." You know, as you think about your life, even think about your day, what matters most to you? What is your motivation? A lot of things can motivate us, right? I know, my heart's just like yours. I understand, I'm a sinner and we struggle. But where we need to be focused day in and day out, moment by moment, is on pleasing Jesus Christ. I don't see any other way around that from this text. It's about pleasing Christ.

Why? Because someday you are gonna stand before him and you're gonna give an account.

That's gonna be a real moment. We've gotta wake up to that.

You've received the affection and the love of Christ. You didn't deserve anything, but Jesus Christ gave his life for you, and that should compel us, as Scripture says, and keep us in check and focused on pleasing him. And you've received an assignment from Christ.

Wherever you find yourself today, the weekend ahead, in the years ahead, you are there to represent Christ. You're an ambassador for him. May the Lord help you, dear students. Let me pray for you. Lord, I do pray for the student body today. I thank you for bringing them here to Cairn. Thank you for the investment that they're making and learning the Word of God and learning so many different areas as they focus on their major. Lord, all this is great, but may we recognize that we're really here ultimately to please you and to glorify you. And Lord, it's, it's very sobering to realize that someday soon we're going to stand before you. We're going to give an account. For our heart, our motives, how we've utilized our lives, what you've given to us in salvation. And Lord, I want to thank you again for the love of Christ, the affection that Jesus Christ showed us and demonstrated in going to the cross and dying for us. We didn't deserve it, but we're so thankful here this morning. Lord, may we embrace this assignment. This is not just something we can blow off, but it's something that we— it's just who we are.

It's, it's got to be our DNA. We are ambassadors for Christ. Lord, help us to live that out even today, to recognize that people need to hear about you. In Jesus' name, amen.