**Spiritual Ambition**

**Acts 19:21 KJV** After these things were ended, Paul purposed in the spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, After I have been there, I must also see Rome.

1. **INTRODUCTION—AMBITION**
2. **General Quotes**

**T. D. English**—Ambition is the germ from which all growth of nobleness proceeds.

**Donald G. Mitchell**—Ambition is the spur that makes men struggle with destiny. It is heaven’s own incentive to make purpose great and achievement greater.

**Young**—Too low they build who build below the skies.

**Tyron Edwards**—High aims form high characters, and great objects bring out great minds.

**Carlyle**—Have a purpose in life, and having it, throw into your work such strength of mind and muscle as God has given you.

**Bulwer**—The man who seeks one, and but one, thing in life may hope to achieve it; but he who seeks all things, wherever he goes, only reaps, from the hopes which he sows, a harvest of barren regrets.

**Chesterfield**—Aim at perfection in everything, though in most things it is unattainable; however, they who aim at it, and persevere, will come much nearer to it, than those whose laziness and despondency make them give it up as unattainable.

**Jonathon Edwards**—Resolved to live with all my might while I do live, and as I shall wish I had done ten thousand ages hence.

**J. Hawes**—Aim at the sun, and you may not reach it; but your arrow will fly far higher than if aimed at an object on a level with yourself.

**Bulwer**—Dream manfully and nobly, and thy dreams shall be prophets.

**T. T. Munger**—Providence has nothing good or high in store for one who does not resolutely aim at something high or good. A purpose, an ambition, is the eternal condition to success.

**Thomas Manton**—Desires are the pulses of the soul; as physicians judge by the appetite, so may you by desires.

**John Neal**—Kites rise against, not with the wind. No man ever worked his passage anywhere but in a dead calm.

1. **Biblical Quotes**

**Psalms 37:4-6 KJV** Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. **[5]** Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring *it* to pass. **[6]** And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday.

**Psalms 63:8 KJV** My soul followeth hard after thee: thy right hand upholdeth me.

**Philippians 3:12-14 KJV** Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.  **[13]** Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but *this* one thing *I do,* forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, **[14]** I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

**1 Corinthians 9:24-27 KJV** Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. **[25]** And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they *do it* to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. **[26]** I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: **[27]** But I keep under my body, and bring *it* into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.

**Hebrews 12:1-2 KJV** Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset *us,* and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, **[2]** Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of *our* faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

1. **PAUL’S AMBITION**

-If ever there were a man who had ambition beating in his soul it was the Apostle Paul. He was a man who was not going to be put off by obstacles and difficulties that came into his path. After his experience on the Damascus Road, the whole course and scope of his life totally changed.

-If there is to be a godly ambition in any man, it has to start with a conversion. The New Birth has to take place in his life. A man has to repent of his past sins, go down in a watery grave of baptism in the Name of Jesus, and then he has to receive the Holy Ghost with the evidence of speaking with tongues.

-The single act of conversion should be enough of a motivation for us to long to want to do something profitable for the Kingdom of God.

1. **A Powerful Force**

-Ambition is a powerful force in life. It has the potential to serve us well or lead to our own doom. Constructive or destructive is another way to look at it. What makes ambition to fall in this particular light? The answer is found in the motives that push our ambition.

-There are many in the world today who are ambitious to do something with their lives.

* Some have an ambition to get a foothold in the financial realm to make money. They carefully plan with savings, investing, and work hard to begin to gain wealth.
* Some have an ambition to gain an education that will open doors for them to gain a career that they desire to spend their life fulfilling.
* Some have an ambition to own their own business so that they can have the freedom of being their own boss and to make a better salary.
* Some have an ambition to own a nice home in a good neighborhood.
* Some have an ambition to have a great family or a great marriage or many other things.

-Ambition and desire causes men to make all sorts of plans and live out much disciplined efforts to get to their particular goals. Their goal would not be something that they would reach overnight but it would take time to fulfill.

-Those that are given to great callings of ambition almost have to ignore time and more importantly live out a purpose of life. Far too many live out their lives in purposeless void called time and they waste everything. More importantly a man has to give himself to a great purpose and calling in life without much regard to how long it will take to get there.

**Carl Sandburg**—The past is a bucket of ashes. (You have to forget it!)

**T. F. Tenney**—Today is crucified between two thieves—yesterday and tomorrow.

-If you will notice with the great men of God or of the world, those who filled noble callings, were men whose true ambition was not destroyed by disappointment and adversity. Instead their ambition caused these men to grow with the obstacles and the disappointments that all will encounter in life.

-I have noticed that there is something that happens to people when they ask us what our ambitions are concerning spiritual purposes. It is amazing that few people think little of it when we share with them our educational plans, our financial plans concerning retirement, our plans to master our health, or plans concerning a particular job and other various things.

-But share with them your thoughts concerning spiritual things and one of two things will happen—

* You are discredited as a zealot and thought of as much too intense about the things related to the Kingdom of God.
* Or they will begin to caution you and tell you about all the folks they knew who were too “spiritual” or “too heavenly minded” and how that they failed God and so forth.

-Funny how we have all the plans in the world concerning this world which is going to pass away but have very few goals concerning what will take place with eternity. I know whereof I speak because I have made the mistake of telling a few what directions I wanted my own life to take concerning spiritual things and they did their best to talk me down off the mountain.

**Mark 11:24 KJV** Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive *them,* and ye shall have *them.*

-Are there spiritual ambitions that you long to accomplish with your life? You better know that I have some spiritual ambitions that are pounding in my heart. I want to make a difference in my world!

-If you are going to affect your world there will be some specific choices that you make! You might even need to let someone else make those choices for you! Sort of like Ben Carson’s mother made for him.

1. **Dr. Ben Carson’s Mother**

Dr. Carson was raised in extreme poverty by a single mother. As a grade school student, he experienced difficulty academically, eventually falling to the bottom of his class. His mother, who was working two to three jobs, became alarmed. She did not want her sons to drop out of school, believing that education was the only way they would escape a life of poverty.

She began to notice that the wealthy families she worked for watched little television. Instead, they spent their time reading books. As a result, she sold her television and insisted her sons read two library books a week, writing a book report on each one. She would then review the reports, make marks on them, and assign two more books. Several years later, to his surprise, Dr. Carson discovered that his mother couldn’t even read.

Dr. Carson said, “Everything changed when I began to read. I started to see myself as a smart person who could learn anything. The whole world opened up to me.”

Indeed it did.

He graduated from Yale with a degree in psychology and then went on to medical school at the University of Michigan. He completed an internship in general surgery and a residency in neurological surgery at Johns Hopkins.

Today, Dr. Carson is Professor of Neurosurgery, Oncology, Plastic Surgery, and Pediatrics
at Johns Hopkins. He has authored over 100 neurosurgical publications, along with three best-selling books, and has been awarded 38 honorary doctorate degrees and dozens of national merit citations, including the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

These would be impressive accomplishments for anyone, but especially so because of his background. And this all happened, according to Dr. Carson, because his mother insisted that he read books.

-You have to get somebody in your life that is going to insist on some things. Their insistence very well could mark you for greatness.

* What is on your MP3 player?
* What websites control you?
* What voices are the most important ones in your life?
* Who are your friends?
* What direction are they consciously or unconsciously pointing you in?

-I pray that you let the force of spiritual ambition awaken your heart in such a powerful way that you become something great for God.

1. **A Godly Force**

-Godly ambition will always be dependent on the will of God. It cannot only be a human craving. It has to be tempered with God’s approval and self-restraint.

-Godly ambition has to be a matter of earnest prayer and consecration. Prayer and consecration goes far in developing the timing and the achievement of godly ambition.

-There will always be work involved with your ambition. Paul had his obligation to fulfill along the way to his ambition of going to Rome. He had to evangelize the lost, prepare and train men for ministry, and he had encouragement and correction to deal with the people who needed it.

-His work was not wasted. All of it was preparing him for it to take place.

-More often than not your ambition will be fulfilled in a roundabout way. It can be like taking the long way home. You will get there but not as quickly.

1. **No One Makes It Alone—The Durer Brothers**

Back in the fifteenth century, in a tiny village near Nuremberg, lived a family with eighteen children. Eighteen!

In order merely to keep food on the table for this big family, the father and head of the household, a goldsmith by profession, worked almost eighteen hours a day at his trade and any other paying chore he could find in the neighbourhood.

Despite their seemingly hopeless condition, two of Albrecht Durer the Elder's children had a dream. They both wanted to pursue their talent for art, but they knew full well that their father would never be financially able to send either of them to Nuremberg to study at the Academy.

After many long discussions at night in their crowded bed, the two boys finally worked out a pact. They would toss a coin. The loser would go down into the nearby mines and, with his earnings, support his brother while he attended the academy. Then, when that brother who won the toss completed his studies, in four years, he would support the other brother at the academy, either with sales of his artwork or, if necessary, also by labouring in the mines.

They tossed a coin on a Sunday morning after church. Albrecht Durer won the toss and went off to Nuremberg.

Albert went down into the dangerous mines and, for the next four years, financed his brother, whose work at the academy was almost an immediate sensation. Albrecht's etchings, his woodcuts, and his oils were far better than those of most of his professors, and by the time he graduated, he was beginning to earn considerable fees for his commissioned works.

When the young artist returned to his village, the Durer family held a festive dinner on their lawn to celebrate Albrecht's triumphant homecoming. After a long and memorable meal, punctuated with music and laughter, Albrecht rose from his honoured position at the head of the table to drink a toast to his beloved brother for the years of sacrifice that had enabled Albrecht to fulfil his ambition. His closing words were, "And now, Albert, blessed brother of mine, now it is your turn. Now you can go to Nuremberg to pursue your dream, and I will take care of you."

All heads turned in eager expectation to the far end of the table where Albert sat, tears streaming down his pale face, shaking his lowered head from side to side while he sobbed and repeated, over and over, "No ...no ...no ...no."

Finally, Albert rose and wiped the tears from his cheeks. He glanced down the long table at the faces he loved, and then, holding his hands close to his right cheek, he said softly, "No, brother. I cannot go to Nuremberg. It is too late for me. Look ... look what four years in the mines have done to my hands! The bones in every finger have been smashed at least once, and lately I have been suffering from arthritis so badly in my right hand that I cannot even hold a glass to return your toast, much less make delicate lines on parchment or canvas with a pen or a brush. No, brother ... for me it is too late."

More than 450 years have passed. By now, Albrecht Durer's hundreds of masterful portraits, pen and silver point sketches, water-colours, charcoals, woodcuts, and copper engravings hang in every great museum in the world, but the odds are great that you, like most people, are familiar with only one of Albrecht Durer's works. More than merely being familiar with it, you very well may have a reproduction hanging in your home or office.

One day, to pay homage to Albert for all that he had sacrificed, Albrecht Durer painstakingly drew his brother's abused hands with palms together and thin fingers stretched skyward. He called his powerful drawing simply "Hands," but the entire world almost immediately opened their hearts to his great masterpiece and renamed his tribute of love "The Praying Hands."

The next time you see a copy of that touching creation, take a second look. Let it be your reminder, if you still need one, that no one - no one - - ever makes it alone!

-This is particularly true of godly ambition. None of the great men that accomplished great things for God did it alone. Scattered throughout the record of Acts and the writings of Paul’s epistles, he names numerous men who helped him to accomplish the will of God. Romans 16 is perhaps the longest roll call of the men and women that helped Paul.

-If we work together, there is no telling what God can do with us; great things can be accomplished for the Kingdom of God. It is when people start pursuing individual stats that the team will sink. If the Durer brothers were willing to work together, we can too!

1. **A Holy Force**

-Spiritual ambition has to be tempered with the difficulties and pain that life brings to all of us.

-When Paul was addressing the Ephesian elders, he told them part of the path toward his ambition being purified:

**Acts 20:19 KJV** Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews:

-Paul’s path to Rome had to take him through Jerusalem first. God moves in mysterious ways and when we get into the questioning mode—we are filled with doubt or we get weary in our well-doing. Those questions always allow for the devil to take advantage of our minds.

-All spiritual ambition has to pass through Jerusalem first. Ambition that does not pass through a holy channel first will collapse later. This kind of human ambition will shipwreck your soul and cause you to become an enemy of the Cross.

* Uncrucified ambition is a destructive force.
* Uncrucified ambition will hurt people.
* Uncrucified ambition will cause men to resort to human means to accomplish holy things.
* Uncrucified ambition is driven by the need for attention.
* Uncrucified ambition is exalted because of pride.
* Uncrucified ambition causes men to seek for shortcuts for spiritual greatness.

-Jerusalem represents a place that has the fear of God in it, a place of spiritual devotion, and brothers that help us to remain accountable to the cause.

-Paul did see Rome—as a prisoner. Remember that there will be disappointing circumstances connected with the attainment of that ambition. Life will not be all that you expect it to be, no matter what motivation you have. This is spiritually healthy for us not to realize the fullness of life here because it should increase our appetite for heaven.

-You may get your heart’s desire but there are some things that will come with it. You will have a chain of captivity and a cross of responsibility that will help you be a true disciple.

-Don’t fall into the trap of thinking that just because you get to Rome that all will be perfect there. Some have never learned that and it becomes destructive to them.

-Paul did not let that discourage or destroy him. He took those circumstances to be ordained by God. He regarded the captivity, the chain, the guard and all that came with it as the ushers to assist him on the way to fulfilling his ambition for God.

-He could have gotten comfortable in his responsibilities and settled down and never accomplished anything for God. But his chains, his captivity, helped him to be an increasing influence for God in that world.

-Never allow yourself to take shortcuts to what God has called you to do. Those who take shortcuts probably have given into laziness and spiritual sloth.

1. **Cats and Mice in Heaven**

The story is told about two mice that made it to heaven. After about two weeks, St. Peter checked in on them to see how things were going with the little mice. They explained that all was quite well. They enjoyed the streets of gold and the sun that was always shining and absolutely everything was first class—except for one thing. They said, “Heaven is so big and we want to see it all. Is there anything you might do for us to help us speed up our sightseeing?” So it was that St. Peter equipped these little mice with roller skates and off they zoomed.

Several weeks passed and St. Peter hadn’t seen them again but he thought little of it. One day he was walking down the street and saw a fat cat laid out in the sun. St. Peter stopped and asked how things were going. That fat cat told St. Peter that he really enjoyed everything—the streets of gold and the sun that was always shining—but what he especially appreciated was the meals on wheels—mice on roller skates. The moral—*If you take shortcuts to see Heaven, the fat cat is going to eat you.*

-You have to be willing to work it out. . .

* One prayer at a time.
* One test at a time.
* One trial at a time.
* One service at a time.
* One Sunday at a time.
* One sermon at a time.
* One day at a time.

-That is what spiritual ambition calls for all of us to do!

-Brother Ensey told us at TBC to not fall into the trap of getting in a hurry as young men. Remember that time is on your side. If the goal of your ambition is gained too early and without proper education to handle it—it will become a curse and not a blessing.

-Men ruin churches with carnal ambition because it billows out of control. They push too hard and destroy it and people leave. Or, they compromise and it grows but it is a place full of tares that are unconverted.

1. **Ambition Will Confront Adversity**

-Just because you have spiritual ambition does not mean that you will not have your share of adversity along the way. Somewhere along the way, you have to make a decision to keep getting back up.

-Financial problems, family problems, job problems, and health problems are things that everyone will have to contend with at some point in their life. You can decide to overcome them or you can slump off into a hole of bitterness and resentment and tell everybody about why you did not have a chance!

-If you start looking at all the giants, it won’t be too long before you will get a grasshopper mentality. Most of the opponents in your life are not giants at all. . . you can always beat them with persistence.

-I have discovered that you learn a whole lot more about life when you are on the losing side than when you are on the winning side all the time. Losing brings out the best in us. . .

**Ernest Hemingway**—The world breaks everyone, and afterward many are stronger in the broken places. (From *Farewell to Arms*.)

-There are all sorts of variable situations that present themselves to us in life and just because you serve the Lord doesn’t mean that it will run smoothly all the time. You have to get your mind off of your mistakes and follow through with the process.

-It is not the dog in the fight but rather the fight in the dog that will make the difference in the end.

-When you face adversity the best thing you can do is pick right back up with a sense of consistency and do what you were doing all along.

* Stay faithful.
* Stay prayerful.
* Keep coming to church.
* Keep being an encouragement.
* Keep doing what you know to do.

-Spiritual growth takes time and it sometimes seems so slow.

 1. **Keep Planting Grass!**

There was a man once who had a terrible problem with weeds on his lawn. His next-door neighbor had a lawn that looked like the greens on a golf course. So the man decided to call the lawn turf company to see what could be done. The lawn turf man came by and poked around the yard, dug a few holes, and pulled up a few weeds and told the man that there was nothing that could be done. Oh, by the way that will be $75.00! The man was incensed but he paid and after the lawn turf company left, he went next door and told his neighbor what they had said. The neighbor with the brilliant yard said, “Yeah they told me the same thing but I just kept planting grass.” That is the way it is with weeds of adversity in your life. . . you just keep on planting grass and it won’t be too many springs that pass that you won’t see the first weed on your lawn.

-Don’t ever give up in the face of adversity. Keep going. Keep pressing. Time has a way of bringing you out on top if you will just stay with the task.

1. **CONCLUSION—YOU ARE WHERE YOU’RE MIND IS. . .**

One time Martin Luther King, Jr. was told to go to the back of the bus to allow for some white passengers to be seated. He got up and went to the back and sat down on the back seat. He told the person sitting just in front of him, “I may walk to the back of the bus, but I left my mind in the front of the bus. One day I will put my body where my mind is.”

-You are where your mind is at. You can choose to live on all of the negative things and all the bad things but if you are willing to look around just a bit, there are some great blessings in your life that you are being robbed of seeing!

-Let’s allow our spiritual ambition to help us do something for ourselves, for our church, for our families, for our God!

-Is there anyone who needs to get their mind right. . . .

**Philippians 4:8 KJV** Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whaijjtsoever things *are* honest, whatsoever things *are* just, whatsoever things *are* pure, whatsoever things *are* lovely, whatsoever things *are* of good report; if *there be* any virtue, and if *there be* any praise, think on these things.