

Beware of the Wisdom of Men

by Carter Conlon

Carter Conlon's sermon warns against the dangers of relying on human wisdom and emphasizes the necessity of divine truth and the power of God in the life of believers.

Duration: 1:00:57

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 2:1-4

Topics: "Beware"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of relying on God's power rather than human effort. He warns against churches and teachings that focus on self-help methods and steps to achieve godliness, rather than on the power of the Holy Spirit. The preacher highlights the story of Lazarus as an example of how Jesus can bring the dead to life simply by His command. He urges listeners to seek a gospel that emphasizes the cross of Jesus Christ, repentance from sin, and the sufficiency of Christ's blood to pay for our sins.

Transcript

This message is one of the Times Square Church Pulpit Series. It was recorded in the sanctuary of Times Square Church in Manhattan, New York City. Other tapes are available by writing World Challenge, PO Box 260, Lindale, Texas 75771 or calling 903-963-8626.

You are welcome to make additional cassettes of this message for free distribution to friends. However, for all other forms of reproduction or electronic transmission, existing copyright laws apply. I'm going to speak a message that I've given the title, Beware of the Wisdom of Men.

First Corinthians Chapter 2. I believe this is very timely. I've been studying this most of the week, this week, and I could really preach on it for a very, very long time. Not that I want you to worry about that, but there's so much in the words of Paul.

I'm trusting the Holy Spirit to allow me to bring it through simply to you. Now, Father, I stand before you as Paul did. God, I stand trembling.

I stand aware of my own weakness. But God, it's not about me. It's about you.

You are the quickening power of God. Holy Spirit, you're the one who comes and quickens those that are weak and gives us strength. I ask you to quicken my natural body and my mind.

I ask you to quicken my heart and my spirit. And I ask, oh God, that I may simply stand as a voice for you, an oracle of God. Father, I thank you, God, that today you are going to see your kingdom advance.

Father, not by any demonstration of human ability, but by an inward working of the Holy Spirit. God, thank you that your word has preeminence in this house, and you will accomplish what you have sent it to do. I believe it, God.

We trust it. You've never failed us in Times Square Church. You've never failed any Christian anywhere who has sought you with an honest heart.

Jesus, thank you for speaking to us today in your mighty name. First Corinthians chapter 2, beginning at verse 1. Paul says, And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with the excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. It's an incredible thing, because later on you see in the words of Paul, he said that people who heard him said his speech was contemptible.

His bodily presence was really nondescript. There was nothing about Paul that would cause people to look and say, wow, this man is a wonderful apostle of God. There was nothing about him.

As a matter of fact, you can honestly say he was a carbon copy of his master, because if you go to Isaiah 53, Isaiah said, There is nothing about you, Jesus, that men should desire you. You've revealed yourself as a root out of dry ground, as it is. There's no form.

There's no comeliness. You took upon yourself a rather ordinary physical body. But the power of God obviously was resident in the son of God.

Paul said, I didn't come to you with excellency of speech. I didn't come to you with excellency of wisdom. And I declared to you the testimony of God, for I determined not to know or be familiar, rather, with anything among you, say Jesus Christ and him crucified.

Now, Paul was saying I didn't want to know anything. I didn't want any other knowledge coming through me, but the knowledge of the cross and what was accomplished on the cross, what was bought through the cross, what is ours through the cross. Paul was, in essence, saying that this is the this is the very essence of my life.

It is all been freely obtained by that which was purchased by Jesus Christ on the cross on Calvary. And Paul says, I don't want to know anything but Christ and him crucified, because this is the source of life. He said, I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling.

And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the spirit and the power that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. Now, Paul warns in the book of First Timothy, Chapter four, verse one, Paul says in the latter times, some shall depart. Actually, if you look through the scriptures, the inference is probably more that many shall depart from the faith.

Many will depart from a knowledge of or confidence in certain divine truths. There will be a vast moving away from truth, even in the professing church of Jesus Christ. You can read it in any commentary.

You study it in the scriptures. The last days. Yes, there's going to be a victorious, sword wielding remnant bride.

There always has been. There always will be. But I'm talking now the masses who call themselves by the name of Christ, there will be a mass moving away from from divine truth.

And the scripture says that they will give heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils. Almost tragic to think of the church or the professing church moving in this direction. The word spirit that Paul uses is a Numa in the Greek, and it means breath, wind, or in other words, it's something that imitates the breath of God.

So Paul is saying there is going to be a vast imitation of the breath of God, that voice of God. There's going to be imitations and many, many people are going to depart from true faith in Jesus Christ and are going to give heed. They're going to give an ear to these these imitations of God's voice.

Genesis two, seven tells us that God created Adam out of the dust of the earth and God breathed into his nostrils and he became a living soul. The word that's used for breath in the scriptures is often translated, at least twice translated in the King James Version as a spirit. It's often used in combination with the word rock, which means which means air put in motion by divine breath.

You could say it's the word of God. Whether God spoke into Adam or whether God breathed into Adam, it's virtually one and the same. Adam was just a lifeless form until God's breath breathed into him.

And it's by God's breath that he became a living soul. Beloved, nothing has changed. God has not changed his ways.

He is still speaking. He speaks through his word to the church today. The Holy Spirit comes and quickens the word of God and God.

Even today, if your heart is open to truth, God breathes into your soul. The word of God that is preached finds a resting place. It's like the dove that Noah let out of the ark in the first instance, flew to and fro and could find no resting place and came back into the ark again.

And it's a type, in a sense, I suppose, of quite often that we're in seasons in our lives where God sends the word, but there's no resting place in our heart for it. So the word has to come back as it is. It was sent for a purpose.

And the Bible says God's word does accomplish its purpose. It can either soften us or harden us. There's a purpose that will be accomplished or perhaps prepare us for another day.

But eventually that same bird was released and found a lodging place. And today I'm believing that God's word in many of your hearts is finding that lodging place because there is no other safety. There is no other source of life or strength.

It's the breath of God that makes us alive in Christ. It doesn't come any other way. It's what God speaks, finding a lodging place in our hearts and we live.

Think about the story of Lazarus, for example, a man absolutely dead, a type of you and I that when we were dead in our trespasses and sins or dead or gripped in the power of death or the power of sin, there was no three steps to getting out of the grave that was presented. Jesus just said, roll away the stone, take away the unbelief or the hardness of heart. And he just simply called and his voice raised a man out of the grave who was four days dead.

It's an amazing thing. Nothing has changed, beloved. You have to understand that's not just a specific miracle for a certain time in the past.

That is a type of how God works. You can be dead and captivated by some besetting sin today, or perhaps you're just absolutely dead in your sin in entirety today. But if you'll open your heart, that's why the writer of Hebrews cried out to the Jewish church and said today, if you can hear his voice, don't harden your hearts.

If you can hear his voice, he's always calling you to himself, always calling you to freedom, always calling you out of pain, always calling you into a new life in Christ Jesus. That's the voice of God. There's no other reason the word of God is preached.

He calls you a people unto himself. You and I. He calls us in our weakness. He calls us in our trembling.

He calls us in our lack that he might be our absolute source of supply if we will just trust him and believe in what he says by faith. I've often shared it that Lazarus had a choice to make in his death. He heard obviously the voice of Christ calling him.

He had a choice to look around and see the tomb and see this encasement of death around him and look at the clothes that had bound him and even think about his own smell. His own sister said he's got to stink by now. He's been four days in the grave and there are so many circumstances to prevent him from moving forward.

But he heard something much greater, giving much more hope, much more alive than any of his circumstances. He heard a voice calling him. Hallelujah.

Hallelujah. Not an ambiguous voice, a very clear voice. Lazarus come forth the same voice that called to Peter in the storm when Peter looked out and said, Lord, if it's you, bid me come.

And Jesus said, come, gave Lazarus the power over death and gave Peter the power of the elements. And that's exactly what God's voice does for you and I. When God calls us, he gives us power to tread on serpents and scorpions and over all the power of the enemy. He gives us power over our old nature that we can no longer be captivated by any of the powers and principalities of evil that once dominated our minds and dominated our thinking.

He makes us new creations in Christ, raises us up where we begin to understand that we now sit with Christ at the right hand of all power and all authority. Hallelujah. Paul said to the Athenian philosophers in the book of Acts, chapter 17, verse 28, he said, in Christ or in him, we live, we move, we have our being.

It's all in Christ. We're not bringing to you clever devices. We're not telling you how to live a more virtuous life.

Paul saying, no, it's not about that. These are these are the philosophers standing around their own altar praising the unknown God. And Paul said, you're worshiping a God in ignorance, but I come to declare him to you.

And there's something about him that you don't understand. He comes and he gives us life and we live and we move and we have our being in him. Amazing when you begin to consider everything that God was speaking through Paul to those people.

Paul says to Timothy, preach the word, be instant in season and out of season, probe, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine for the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but after their own lust, they shall heap to themselves teachers having itching ears and they shall turn away their ears from the truth and shall be turned to fables. Incredible when you think of it. Paul is saying that there's a time coming into the world when a people who are led by their lust.

And if you look it up in the original text, it means the under surrendered desires of the corrupted soulless condition of man, people who don't want to really be led by God anymore. Really, the inferences they want to fit God into their everyday desires. They want to take Jesus Christ and yes, do gravitate to his salvation.

And they want him as savior, but they really don't want him as Lord. They say, well, Christ, I want you because you're going to give me peace and you're going to make me healthy and you're going to keep me happy. You're going to give me a sense of being while I pursue my objectives in life.

And I'm going to ask you to bless my objectives. I'm going to ask you to let me, in effect, lead you. And you become my good luck charm, Jesus, along the journey.

And you're going to fight against my enemies. And you're going to bless me and keep me and make me healthy and happy. And you're going to give me a destiny and a wonderful self-image and all of these things.

So really, you'd have to be a fool, in a sense, not to invite that kind of a Christ along on the journey. And folks, you'd have to be a fool to invite that kind of a Christ along. Because that is not the real Jesus.

That is another Christ. Jesus comes not only to be Savior, but he is Lord of our lives. He has the right to our lives.

He has the right to take the reins of our heart. We say, Lord, come and sit on the throne of my heart. That means there are new desires planted.

There's a new direction. There are new causes that the Lord begins to reveal in through each one of our hearts. He says the people are led by their lusts.

And many of them will turn away from the truth and the truth means a clear reality. Which is unveiled as opposed to a mere appearance that doesn't have any reality to it. They'll be turned from the truth and turn to fables.

Now, this is important to understand this, because the word for fables in the Greek is muthos. And here's what it means. They're going to be turned to myths.

There is nothing necessarily false in a myth. A myth can contain good logic and reasoning. However, it is that which is fabricated by the mind, which is set over against the real and the actually true.

And so there's going to be a great deal of human reasoning. This is really what Paul is saying, that is going to rise in the pulpit and take the place of the word of God. There will be people standing and preaching thoughts about God, but not God's thoughts in a sense about himself.

People saying, I think and I feel like we went through a generation, really 10, 15 years ago. I remember the charismatic Pentecostal churches went through this great succession of conferences. I call them the I

think and I feel prophets who read a half a line of scripture and then spend the next hour saying, well, I think and I feel about God.

I think God said this. It may not be in the word of God, but they dare to anybody to challenge their authority to say God said this to me, even if it's contrary to the word of God. So they they end up preaching thoughts about God.

But in the end, it ends up being completely different than what God says about himself and they are turned to good principles. And the end result is the church moving into human effort to try to be godly. Twelve steps to this and seven steps to that and 14 steps to fulfilling your destiny.

And all these things that we have to do. And it's really not anything that God says about himself. God says, I just simply breathe into you and you live.

I do the miraculous. I take you in your weakness and you just simply hear what I say. You believe it in your heart.

And by the power of the Holy Ghost, it begins to become a reality in you. You are raised up to glorify me all throughout the earth. In the last days, people with unyielded hearts to God will be turned from truth to human wisdom and logic.

In 2nd Corinthians chapter 11. Verses three and four. Paul says it this way.

He said, I fear. In verse three, he says, I fear less by any means as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety. So your mind should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.

For if he that comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive another spirit which you have not received or another gospel which you have not accepted, you might well bear with him. And Paul said, I fear that you should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. All folks, the devil will always try to bring him a multiplicity of words, especially into the church of Jesus Christ to corrupt God's people from the simplicity of faith.

The simplicity of just saying God said it and I believe it. And that settles it for me. God's calling, I'm going.

He will give me the power that I need to do what he's called me to do. So simple. God says, I will breathe into you.

You receive it. I'll make it a reality. And we will walk together and you will be my servant fulfilling my purposes on this earth.

And Paul says, if you begin to bear with these other messengers, you're going to end up opening your heart to those who bring another gospel to you. Again, in 2 Corinthians 11, verse 13, he talks about messengers that appear so sincere. He says, for such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ.

And no marvel for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore, it's no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness, whose end shall be according to their works. All folks, they can be sincere.

They can cry tears. They can tell you how much they care about you and how much they love you. But nevertheless, they are animated by Satan because they are ministering out of the deception of their own unyielding hearts.

They themselves don't want to go in the pathway that Christ has called them to go in. They are grasping and grappling for position and prominence and money and reputation. And the very grasping of their hearts takes them out of the life of Christ.

They become opposite to what Christ is and who he is. And Paul says in 2 Timothy 3, 13, they are ministers who are constantly being deceived and deceiving others. I saw one time a tape of a very well-known supposed evangelist on television and spouting all kinds of foolishness and then stopping and saying, just a minute now, the Holy Spirit, what is it you're saying to me? And then and then comes back with more being deceived and deceiving, being deceived and deceiving.

I have little doubt that this man is probably hearing a voice, but it is not the voice of God. The words that come out of his mouth do not lead you to Christ. They do not lead you to the cross.

They do not lead you to a surrendered life. They do not lead you to repentance. They do not lead you to yieldedness to the will of God for your life.

So they're being deceived and they're deceiving it. Oh, folks, it takes no discernment anymore to see these things. It's become so absolutely blatant that it's tragic that even some of God's years ago, some of his choices, servants are being led down these pathways of deception because there's no longer any discernment in their hearts.

Second Corinthians again, verse 11, chapter 11, rather, verse 19. Paul says he's impassioned when he says it. He said, you suffer fools gladly seeing that yourselves are wise.

Paul is speaking to the Corinthian church and he said, you've allowed fools to come and preach to you. I'm speaking now to everyone who's refused to turn off the televangelist, many of them and all of these tapes and radio programs, and most of them are idiocy in the name of Christ. He said, you suffer fools gladly because you're so you've become so wise to the Corinthian church.

So he said, for you suffer if a man brings you into bondage, if a man devours you, if a man takes of you, if a man exalts himself, if a man smites you on the face. Paul is impassioned because the Corinthian church was allowing false teachers that have opposed his apostleship and the word of God to come in and to begin, as Paul saw it, to devour a portion, as it is of the Corinthian church. And Paul was impassioned.

He said, in your own wisdom, you are giving place to fools who are preaching the gospel as they see it to you. He says, verse 20 says, you are opening your heart and allowing them to take you into their captivity. Peter says in 2 Peter 2, 19, while promising liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption.

Folks, it's not it's not happenstance that all of these ministers and ministries in the last 10 years are just falling like dominoes. Folks, that's what they have been doing. It's been behind the scenes has been going on for a long time.

They stand and they are in captivity. They promise liberty, but they are not free in Christ. They're not yielded to the purposes of God.

They have an agenda to preach the gospel. And you can be sure it always ends in your wallet. You can be sure.

Set your watch by it. It will go to your wallet. I don't care how sincere it is or where it starts.

It will go to your wallet with a lie, because that's what's in their heart. It's all about money. It's all about reputation.

It's all about being lifted up and being exalted. And Paul cries out to the church and says, in your own wisdom, you've been warned, Paul said, but you've made the choice not to turn it off. And you're allowing these fools to come into your home and preach the gospel to you.

And they're taking you into their captivity. You begin to believe their lies. You begin to believe that if you give them a thousand dollars, that God owes you 100,000 in return.

It's a lie. And you begin to believe it. They devour you, Paul said.

They take away your strength like a roaring lion coming into your house with smooth words, but devouring that which is the true life of Christ. They take of you, Paul says again in verse 20, if a man take of you, Isaiah said it the best in Isaiah 56, 11. Speaking of the shepherds that were bringing Israel into captivity, he said they're all greedy dogs which can never have enough.

They're shepherds that cannot understand. They all look everyone to their own way, everyone from for his gain and from his own quarter. In other words, everyone has an agenda.

His ministry is the only ministry that can win the world. His ministry is the one that God is raising up. He is God's man or woman of the hour.

He looks only for his own gain. He is following his own devices. They cannot understand and they can never have enough.

It's never enough. Oh, folks, when are we going to turn it off? When is the church going to wake up and turn it off and bankrupt these false shepherds, bankrupt every last one of them? And Paul says, and they smite you on the face. In other words, they just like when Christ did before Pilate, they they they attempt to take away your confidence.

Christ was standing there with confidence in his father and the devil did everything in his power to wipe that confidence off his face. The refocusing, the turning to other philosophies is to take away your confidence in God. First Corinthians chapter four, if you go there with me, please.

Now, if I raising my voice today, I'm not upset with anybody. I am in passion for the church of Jesus Christ. I think it's a tragedy what's happening today.

First Corinthians chapter four, verse eight. Now, Paul exposes some of the theology that is coming their way. He says, now you are full.

Now you are rich and you have reigned as kings without us. Think about this for a moment. Paul says, here's the theology.

You're full and rich. Does it sound a little bit like glad to see you have need of nothing and you're now reigning as kings? And Paul says, I wish you would have waited for us because we don't seem to be in the same place that you are. And I went to God, Paul says, you did reign that I might also reign with you.

I wish to God you really were reigning, that I might join you because he said, I think that God has set forth us the apostles last as it were appointed to death. We're made a spectacle to the world and to angels and to men. We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are wise in Christ.

We are weak, but you are strong. You are honorable, but we are despised. Even to this present hour, we hunger and thirst and are naked and buffeted and have no certain dwelling place.

We labor working with our own hands, being reviled. We bless being persecuted. We suffered being defamed.

We intrigued. We are made as the filth of the world and as are the offscouring of all things under this day. I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved sons, I warn you, Paul said, I warn you, for though you have 10,000 instructors in Christ, yet have you not many fathers.

For in Christ Jesus, I have begotten you through the gospel. Wherefore, I beseech you, be followers of me for this cause. I send it to you, Timothy, who is my beloved son, faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways, which be in Christ as I teach everywhere in every church.

Now, some are puffed up as though I would not come to you, Paul said, but I will come to you shortly if the Lord will. And I will not know the speech of them which are puffed up, but the power for the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power, not in word, not an empty talk, not in talk about reigning, not in talk about being full, not in talk about destiny. The kingdom of God is not in talk, it's in power.

That's the inherent. That's the word in the Greek is *dunamis*. That means the inherent or enabling power of God.

Paul says, here's the evidence I'm looking for. It's not the talk of talkers. It's the power of God in the true church of Jesus Christ.

This is the evidence I'm looking for. It's the man or woman who can stand and say, this is what I used to be. But by the power of God and the promises of God, this is what I am today.

This is what God is speaking into my heart, and I am trusting him for the power to enable me to go and do what he has called me to do. Paul said this is the kingdom of God. It's not just a bunch of empty talk.

It's the power. It's the enabling power. First Corinthians chapter two.

Again, Paul says verse one, I brethren, when I came to you, I came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring to you the testimony of God. In other words, Paul saying I didn't come to you with anything that drew to myself. But yet I was openly showing you the testimony of God.

Verse two, he says, I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified. Paul says, my theology was not of man, but of Christ and what he accomplished for us on the cross. I warn you, not only Times Square Church, but everyone who hears my voice on tape and radio, wherever else this message is going to go, if you are sitting under a gospel that does not talk about the cross of Jesus Christ, if you're sitting under a gospel that does not call you to turn away from sin and turn to

righteousness, if you're not sitting under a gospel that talks about Christ's blood being all sufficient to pay the price for your sin, his word being your absolute guide, his spirit being the power that makes his word a reality.

If you're not sitting in a place where you're hearing about God's right through Christ to have lordship of your life and to do whatever he wants with you, you're not sitting under the gospel of Jesus Christ. Verse three says, I came to you, I was with you in weakness and fear and much trembling. My speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the spirit and of power.

Paul said, there's nothing about my outward appearance or presentation that was attractive to you, yet you were deeply moved upon to believe and embrace the testimony that flowed to you through me. Paul said it was a demonstration of the spirit and a power. I was so weak.

I was so frail. I was trembling. You knew it.

You saw it. Yes, there was an inherent power flowing through my life that convinced you of the reality of Jesus Christ. In my weakness, Paul said, you saw that God's revelation of himself in Christ is sufficient, as Paul says in first Corinthians 6:14, God has both raised up the Lord and will also raise us up by his own power.

Paul said, you saw something in me. You saw something in me. And it was not the preaching of man's wisdom.

I didn't come to you exalting myself. I didn't come to you with wonderful speech, but there was something of life flowing through me that you had to reckon with. And you were brought to the understanding that this is God.

This is the kingdom of God. This is the power of God. Paul says, you saw Christ in me.

This is really the issue. You saw Christ and you were convinced of the reality of God. But Paul goes on in verse six.

He says, but yet we do speak wisdom. It's not that we are unwise. You know, some people glory in the statement that we are fools for Christ's sake and they stay fools the rest of their life.

No, we do speak wisdom. There is an incredible wisdom given to the true Christian, the true preacher, teacher of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the true follower of Christ. There's an incredible wisdom.

Paul says, we speak wisdom among those that are perfect, yet not the wisdom of this world or of the princes of this world that comes to nothing. In other words, the wisdom of the world is going to end at Armageddon. It's going to bring the world to the brink of destruction.

We don't speak this wisdom that is bringing the world to nothing. But we speak the wisdom of God. Verse seven, chapter two, first Corinthians, in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world unto our glory.

Paul said there was something that came from the heart and mouth of God even before the creation of the world. This is that there's a mystery and God gave it to us for our benefit, that he might be glorified in us for our edification, as it is, which none of the princes of this world knew. In other words, nobody.

Pilate didn't know it. Caiaphas didn't know it. The religious leaders didn't know it.

Nobody knew it. Walking in their own wisdom, everybody trying to figure out how to get through. Pilate trying to figure out how to govern an ungovernable people.

Caiaphas trying to figure out how to preserve his place and the religious system. Everyone else trying to figure out how to throw off the bondage of the Romans. And he said there was no wisdom in it, because if they had known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory.

There is no wisdom in man. There's no wisdom in the natural man's thinking or trying to, in a sense, procure his own spiritual end. But as it is written, verse nine, I have not seen nor heard.

Neither have entered into the heart of man the things that God has prepared for them that love him. But verse 10, God has revealed them to us by his spirit for the spirit searches all things. Yea, the deep things of God.

For what man knows the things of a man save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so, the things of God knows no man but the spirit of God. And Paul says, Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. There is the end of it all.

Paul says, We speak wisdom, but this wisdom comes from the Holy Ghost. As the Holy Ghost illuminates the scriptures to us and makes it known within our inward man, we become aware. Here's wisdom.

We become aware by the spirit of the things that have been freely given to us by God. Hallelujah. The Christian life is an exciting life.

It should be the most exciting life in the universe. Who would want to trade it off for the foolishness of man's thinking? I wouldn't want to trade it for four steps to anything. Folks, it's the Holy Ghost who comes and says to your heart, Here's what God is speaking to you.

Here's what God is going to do. This is the kingdom of God. God is going to raise you up.

God is going to give you love. God is going to send you to the mission field. God is going to do something in your life.

The Lord says, I know my thoughts through Jeremiah, that I think towards you thoughts of good and not of evil to bring you to an expected end. God said, I have a purpose for your life. And it was it was designed before you're even conceived in your mother's womb.

I have thoughts that I'm thinking about you. But nobody but the Holy Spirit knows that. Nobody's aware of it but the spirit of God.

And he begins to make your heart aware of what he is thinking and you begin to flow in the supernatural. The devil will do everything to take the word of God out of your heart. He will do everything to supplement it with other principles and good wisdom, even truth.

But it's not the word of God and it will bring no life into your soul. Peter said in Second Peter, chapter one, verse three and four, he said, according as his divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness through the knowledge of him that has called us to glory and virtue, his divine power, Peter

says, has given us all things that we need for life and godliness through the knowledge of him. This is Christ that has called us to glory and virtue.

Now, the word glory means having God's character or God's image. He's called us to have the character and the image of God in our weakness, not in our strength. We are all to follow.

Paul said you've had many instructors, but few fathers. He said it's not building up your self-image that would promote the kingdom of God. It's you standing in your weakness, but you're obeying God and something is flowing through your life that the world can understand the wisdom of the world.

Their only response is what course have you taken? Where did you get this ability to do this? They would come to Jesus, see the kingdom flowing and the question constantly, the Pharisees, how can we work these miracles? Where do you get this power? And Peter said, we've been called by God to bear his image and character and virtue means the excellence of God revealed in us through the work of our salvation. We're called to represent Christ on this earth by allowing the power of God to touch us in the areas of our deepest need and our deepest weakness, by allowing God to lift us out of our obvious insufficiency and to bring us into the glorious freedom of knowing what it's like to walk with the power of God flowing through us and resident in us. Have you ever been in a place, even in your office or apartment building where all of a sudden it's just a supernatural love begins to flow for a person and you go home and you say, God, I don't know.

How did that happen? I don't have that kind of love or somebody asks for counsel. And all of a sudden there's words coming out of your mouth and you're wondering, where is this? And it's the word of God. It's just starting to come back and starting to flow through you.

You seem to be able to see right into that person's situation. When you go home, say, God, this is amazing. I don't have that kind of knowledge.

I don't have that kind of ability. And yet all of a sudden it's beginning to manifest in my life through my obvious weakness. God, you are being glorified and people have to stop and deal with it.

Amazing. In the book of Acts, it says, perceiving that they were in Peter and John, ignorant and unlearned men, they were astounded by the wisdom with which they spoke. Obviously, they were speaking maybe with not the most refined language of their day, but there was such a God given direction, a God given power in their speech that people had to stand and take notice.

There's something so different about these men. And then Peter goes on to say, whereby are given to us exceeding great and precious promises that by these you might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. And we talked about that lust, which means unsundered human desire.

We are given exceeding great and precious promises by these, we become partakers of the divine nature of God and we escape the corruption that is in the world. We escape the corruption of human reasoning and wisdom. We opt into the life of God.

We become everything that God called us to be. Go to 2 Corinthians 13, 4. We'll close with this scripture. I want to show you why in one verse of scripture, much of modern Christianity is going off track.

I want to show you why people are heaping together teachers, they're heaping them together. Through the loss of their own heart, they're allowing themselves to hear another gospel. Then I'm going to show you why in one verse of scripture.

2 Corinthians 13, 4, Paul says, For though he was crucified through weakness, yet he lives by the power of God. For we also are weak in him, but we shall live with him by the power of God toward you. Now, I want to read it from two different translations to you to understand more what Paul is saying in that verse.

Now, listen to me very carefully. Paul says, For to be sure, he was crucified in weakness, yet he lives by God's power. Likewise, we are weak in him as he was humanly weak.

In other words, we are we do identify with his weakness and his humanity. Yet by God's power, Paul says, we will live with him to serve you. And here's the issue.

People don't want to serve. They want to be rich. They want to reign.

They want a wonderful destiny. But they don't want to serve. But Jesus said the Son of Man didn't come to be served, but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many.

We will rule and reign one day. But today we are called to walk in his footsteps through a darkened world the very same way that he did. But they don't want to serve.

They don't want to go to the poor. They don't want to be the extended hand of God. They don't want to give of their resources to a man or woman who can give nothing back in return.

They don't want to come to church and ever even think of picking up a broom or sweeping a floor. And because they're led by that lower desire, which is always the lower desire of the human heart is always a desire for man to elevate himself, because the fallen nature of man always wants to be God. His own God and ultimately everybody else's God.

But Paul says it was by God's power that we will live with Christ to serve you. And that's the key. That is the only key.

If I am not a servant, if if everything I learn and everything I preach and teach does not bring me to the place of serving God's people and fallen humanity, I have missed the whole thing. I've missed it. He said the two greatest commandments are that we love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength and our neighbor as we love ourselves.

On these two, you find all the commandments. You find all the prophets. The heart of a servant.

We find multitudes of people now gathering around theologies of destiny. But you see, the destiny is never jail like Paul or hardship. It's always greatness, money, health, power, the slice of the pie.

It's a lie. It's another gospel. It's another Jesus.

Paul said, I live to serve you. I see that. I see it so clearly.

And my prayer is God, help me, help me to never move or preach or embrace another gospel. We don't go to Trenchtown, Jamaica to lord it over the people or the church. We go to serve.

We go to wash feet. We go not to lift up anyone's name but Jesus. And hopefully to encourage the church and to see people come to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

When we were in Nigeria last year, I didn't know this, but many of the people and many of this choir after the crusade was over, it was a phenomenal crusade. Thousands and thousands had come to Christ. And after the crusade was over, the people went back and started cleaning up papers and cleaned up the hole.

It was a huge, huge field and cleaned up all the paper. There had been over half a million people there every night. Now, obviously, there's a lot of litter.

And they started cleaning the field. And I'm told the cars stopped on the highway. And people got out and said, who are these people? Why are they doing this? Pastors had a meeting just before we left.

And it has continued to today. The leaders had a meeting and said, why are these people visiting our prisons? And we are not. Why are they helping our orphans? And we don't.

Why are they reaching out to the Islamic community with love? And we're not doing it. We're taking up arms and fighting. It's the power to serve that makes the church truly great.

The power to serve and beloved, I got to tell you, it does begin in your home. It does begin in your marriage. It does begin with your children.

It does begin in your workplace. It does begin in the apartment building. The power to serve.

Is evidence that you really are embracing the word of God. You're not a lord over anything. You're a servant to everything.

And that I believe is the truth. Then he goes on in verse 5, chapter 13, verse 5. And he says, examine yourselves, whether you be in the faith. Paul says, prove your own selves.

Know you're not your own selves that how that Jesus Christ is in you, except you be reprobates. And Paul said, take a good look now. Then he's speaking to the Corinthian church.

Is this the Christ in you? Is this where God's word is leading you? He said, if it isn't and if it isn't Christ, he said, then you are still. Now, the word reprobate is not frothing at the mouth of a virtual idiot out on the street. It really means I'm discerning.

It means void of judgment and having a mind that is abhorred by God. Very fearful condition to be in a reprobate means you cannot discern what is God and what is not. You're absolutely void of the ability to discern yourself and you possess a mind that God abhors.

And that's a very fearful condition to be in, even in the house of God and professing to know God. We need to ask ourselves, honestly, am I in the faith? Have I trusted Christ? Obviously, first and foremost, for my salvation. Have I come to church? Why am I here? Am I here to better myself or am I really coming to give my life to Christ? What am I trusting in for my salvation? Am I trusting in my church attendance and my Bible reading and doing good deeds? Or am I trusting in Christ? Am I really in the faith? You don't even get in the faith until you get through the door.

It's like, folks, physically speaking, it's like standing on Broadway and 50th all morning and then going to work tomorrow and telling people you were at Times Square Church. Well, you sort of were. You didn't

come through the door, though.

You were outside. You looked at the banner and you walked around the building and you saw how nice it was. You may have even heard reports of people coming out of what God is doing.

But you yourself never went through the door. You have to go through the door to get into Christ. And Christ himself said, I am the door.

You can't. There is no other way in. You have to trust me for your salvation.

Once you come in through the door, the Holy Spirit now begins to take this word and make it alive and begins to manifest God's power through your weakness, begins to change your life. You have a testimony, not just of something 10 years ago, but it's an ongoing testimony. This is what I was yesterday.

This is where I'm going. This is what God is doing. The exciting thing about the Christian testimony is, is you're not relegated to telling some old story about how you used to do such and such 15 years ago.

And Jesus came into your life and now and you were set free. Well, I'm very happy for 15 years ago. But folks, if that's all it was about, it'd be a pretty miserable walk from here on in.

No, there's a hymn that says morning by morning, new mercies. I see morning by morning. I wake up.

And as I'm turning to the word of God and the Holy Spirit is breathing it into me and making it real. He's changing me daily from image to image and glory to glory by the power of God. This is the Christian testimony.

He's manifesting his power through my weakness. He didn't call me because I was strong in any area. As a matter of fact, if you really want to take it deeper, he's got to get our strengths out of the way before his glory can be revealed.

Amazing. Can we say that what people see in us is Christ living it in through me? Is my boast in the cross as Paul says, I don't want to know anything but Christ. Christ is my life.

Christ bought my salvation. Christ rose from the dead. Christ sits at the right hand of all authority and power.

Christ is my sufficiency. I don't want to know anything, Paul says, but Christ. Don't bring me any wisdom.

It's Christ. Christ. It's the things, the true wisdom are the things that God speaks into my heart.

That's wisdom. And no one in the world knows this kind of wisdom. It's so much higher.

It's so much greater. The wisdom of man will cause me to have fits and starts of effort to try to better myself and change. But it always ends in failure.

The wisdom that comes from above. The Bible says is peaceable, easy to be entreated. It comes into my heart and God by supernatural power begins to change me.

I may still look weak on the outside, but I'm no longer weak on the inside. Something comes into my life and people around have to reckon with it because it's God. It's the life of God pouring through me.

It's the spirit of God speaking through me. It's the hands of God touching through me. It's the feet of God walking through me.

There's a confidence in God that even when I have to go through fire and flood and water and sickness and trial, and I am always triumphing, I am more than a conqueror in Christ. I have a confidence that has no plan. Christ is the plan.

I don't need any other plan. I put myself into his hand and Jesus says, nobody can take you out of my father's hand. Nobody.

I've had people say, are you not afraid to go into these areas of difficulty and violence and crime and shooting and all these other things? I'm not in the least afraid. I understand something. I am until God says I'm not.

It's as simple as that. My days are not in the hand of a mugger with a gun. My days are in the hands of God.

God, I praise you. I thank you, Lord. Thank you, Jesus.

Thank you, Lord. I believe like Paul who said, as long as I live, I live for Christ. And if I die, it's gain to me.

I'm going home, Paul says, to be with God for all of eternity. But till that day, I will preach Christ. I will teach Christ.

I will live Christ. I will exalt Christ. I will talk of Christ.

I will boast of Christ. I will talk of the cross. Where all my redemption was bought for me.

And beyond everything, I believe God for a servant's heart. We don't have that. We have nothing.

A servant's heart. Thank you, Jesus. I'd like us to sing a song, a choir.

You know that song, you don't have to worry. You don't. With Jesus, I can make it.

I want to give an altar call today. Obviously, if you're unsaved, Jesus will receive you to himself. The Holy Spirit put on my heart while I was speaking to give an altar call for everyone who's afraid.

Just afraid to take that step of faith. And whatever it is that God's already speaking to you, just so afraid to get up and say, I'm going to trust God and I'm going to go with God wherever it is that he sends me, whatever it is that he asks me to do. I understand now that I'm called to be a servant.

I'm not called to be this great person. I'm called to be a servant. And Jesus said, the greatest among you will be a servant.

I'm called to servanthood and I'm willing to let God lead me. I'm willing to say, Lord, you are now the governor of my life by faith. I don't have to figure it out.

And I'm not going to figure it out. You just lead me. Lead me.

And where you lead me, I will follow you. I'll go with you, Lord. And I will trust you for the power to serve people in your name.

I will trust you for the ability that I need to be everything you've called me to be. God, I will trust you and you will not fail me. If you are captivated by a besetting sin, you come to and the Holy Spirit is going to set you free today.

I'm going to take authority over that captivation and you're going to agree with me. And we're going to see the prison doors open, the wounded hearts healed. You'll begin to understand the kingdom of God is in power.

It's in God doing the miraculous in a people. That's the kingdom of God and through a people. I don't want to ask if there's somebody in the education annex, the balcony, the altar, the main sanctuary could say, Pastor, I'm not saved.

I lived outside the kingdom of God. I'm a sinner. But today I've been here and I'm moved upon by God.

I believe that Christ Jesus is the son of God. I believe that he died on a cross and paid the price for my sins. And I believe that if I will open my heart to him and confess my need of him, that he will receive me to himself.

Forgive me. He will cleanse me. The Holy Spirit will come to me and give me the power to be a new person, a new creation.

I believe that this day will be the pivotal turning point for the rest of my life and eternity. Eternity will mark this day. I'm going to give my life to Jesus today.

And it's not going to be a religious thing. It's going to be a relationship with the son of God. And I'm going to trust him to change me, trust him for the miraculous.

Nicky Cruz was told by psychologists that he was unredeemable. That's how they analyzed him and said, you are unredeemable. Well, I wanted you to know this unredeemable man came to Christ.

He's a marvelous preacher of the gospel, a wonderful man of God. He has raised a lovely family, a lovely, godly family. This unredeemable man under the wisdom of man came to God.

And God's by his power did a miracle in his life. An absolute miracle. This is the God we serve.

This is the Christ. This is the church of Jesus Christ. We are to be miracles of his power.

Every one of us. Nobody's to be left out of what God will do. And today, if you'd like to open your heart and receive Christ as your savior, he died on a hill for you, public and naked in his generation.

That's what they considered nakedness. I'm going to ask you to raise your hand high right now, wherever you are. If you want to receive Christ as your savior, just unashamedly raise it up.

Balcony. Go ahead. Annex main sanctuary.

Unashamedly. I'm coming to Jesus Christ today to give him my their hands all over the place. Now, just anyone else.

Just right. Yes. God bless you.

Way up there in the back, all the way through the back of the balcony. Thank you. God bless you in the annex.

I know the Lord. I can't see your hands, but the Lord can see them right now. Now, those that raise their hands, let's pray a prayer together.

Let's believe God. Look at we have a little girl here, a little boy. I'm sorry.

You've got to be no more than what? Six, six years old. I guessed it right. And your mom with you.

And so mom and her son coming to the Lord. Six years old. Thank God.

Hallelujah. This is a marvelous moment for those that are coming to Christ. Pray with me now, Lord Jesus.

I believe that you are the son of God. I believe that you died to pay the price for all the wrong things that I have done. Dear God, I have violated your word and your law.

I deserve to be punished. But in your kindness, you took my punishment upon yourself. And all you ask of me is to give my heart to you.

Jesus, at this very moment, I open my heart to you. I invite you to come in to my life. Thank you for receiving me.

Thank you for cleansing me. Thank you for giving me the Holy Spirit and helping me to understand your promises in my life. Oh, Jesus, I confess you as my Lord and my Savior.

And I believe on the authority of what you said to me in your word that at this very moment, I'm saved. I'm saved. I am saved.

Hallelujah. Hallelujah. Save.

New Believers class every Friday night. If you really are saved, you should make an effort to get in and be part of that. There's 73 people, the last count I heard there now.

You'll not be left alone. A lot of new believers in Christ here at Times Square Church. Now for the rest.

You're stepping out and believing that God's going to do something with you. The only thing I can tell you is don't take it in your own hands again. Because then you're going to fail.

But if you believe him, if you just believe him, get in this book, start to read it. Start in the New Testament. Start to read it.

This is God's love letter to you. Everything in this book is for you. Everything.

Every promise is for you. And you begin to read it. And as you read it, the Holy Ghost is going to cause things to jump off the page.

Your heart's going to burn inside. It's going to burn inside. I remember when I read the scripture, you know my story.

I came out of horrible panic attacks for nine years. It hospitalized me at one point. And when I read in this Bible, I can do all things to Christ who strengthens me.

And my heart began to burn. Now I knew there was no hope for me to ever be a public speaker. If it was ever going to happen, it had to be God.

My heart began to burn and God's Holy Spirit comes and makes his promises a reality. He'll give you everything that you need, that you can glorify him. Because he loves you.

Now, Father, I stand as one pastor of this church and take authority over every bondage of the devil, every lie of the evil one that has tried to rob these precious saints of God, of their inheritance in Jesus Christ. I command in Christ's name, every prison door to open. I command every heart to open to the healing word of God that will wipe away every tear and give peace where there's sorrow.

Father, I thank you that the enemy has nothing in the people of God. I thank you, Lord, that you're going to make this a discerning people, a discerning bride that know the difference between the voice of God and the voice of the devil. God, I thank you, Lord, that you're going to open their eyes and ears, that they can see all the deceiving smooth talkers for what they are and turn away from them and turn to you.

Oh, God, you will never deceive your people. Lord, you will show your people in your word the strength and truth and a pathway for life. And Father, I thank you.

Now pray with me. Lord Jesus, I'm not afraid to step out and trust you. You have never failed any person ever throughout history who has trusted you.

And I will not be the first. You will not fail me. This will be my testimony.

I'm opening my heart and I am believing that you're going to give me life and strength and the power of God to be everything that you have called me to be. I believe this and I move towards it. Oh, Jesus, help me now to hear your voice.

And when I hear it, to move to the sound of it. Because when you speak, I live. God, thank you.

This is going to be a wonderful walk, an incredible journey. I look forward to it. Oh, Jesus, be glorified in me, be glorified in my life and use me for your glory.

I believe it. I receive it. Hallelujah.

Hallelujah. This is the conclusion of the message.

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