

# Lead Me in the Way Everlasting

by Carter Conlon

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of yielding to God's thoughts and ways, and seeking truth and wisdom in order to experience abundant life and prosperity.*

**Duration:** 1:00:30

**Scripture:** Psalm 51:10, Psalm 126:6, Isaiah 55:6-7, Isaiah 55:9, Isaiah 55:12, Luke 14:26

**Topics:** "The Way Everlasting"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the power and effectiveness of God's word in our lives. He encourages listeners to cry out to God and acknowledge that His ways and thoughts are higher than ours. The preacher explains that when we allow God's word to enter our hearts, it brings about transformation and produces fruit in our lives. He also highlights the importance of letting go of our own thoughts and desires in order to embrace the treasure of God's kingdom. The sermon concludes with a prayer for God's strength and an invitation to follow His everlasting way.

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## Transcript

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None of these messages are copyrighted, and you are welcome to make copies for free distribution to friends. Let's go to Psalm 139, please, in the Old Testament. Lead me in the way everlasting.

Lead me in the way everlasting. Let's pray together. Almighty God, Lord, I thank you for your strength and your power.

Lord, I rest in your strength this morning. I rest in the anointing of God that you place upon those that you call to proclaim your kingdom. I thank you, Lord, that it's not my wisdom but yours.

God, it's got nothing to do with me. It's got everything to do with you. I ask you for the grace now to disappear and to rest in your promises and to trust in the power of God that you will impart to every heart, to every life that places its confidence in you.

Let your kingdom advance. Let the kingdom of darkness suffer great violence in this house today. Lord, I thank you, God, for what you have already determined in your heart to accomplish even before we open

the Scriptures today.

Before the world was created, you had something in your mind for this day. Lord, we thank you, God, that we are now here. We have arrived at this point in history, and your purposes will be fulfilled.

For you never send your word out without an intended purpose in your heart. Lord, God, let your purposes be accomplished in this house, in us. We pray as you taught us to pray.

We say, thy kingdom come, thy will be done in us here on earth as it is in heaven. Lord, we yield our hearts. We yield our lives.

We ask, Lord, that this word that we're to hear today would find a dwelling place in each of our hearts and bring us to resurrection life in Jesus Christ. Lord, we acknowledge your power and your grace. We ask you, almighty God, to set up your throne in every area of our life, O God, where you determined to conquer this day.

We thank you for this, believing with all our hearts in Jesus' name. Amen. Psalm of David, Psalm 139, the last two verses of Psalm 139.

David says, search me, O God, and know my heart. Try me and know my thoughts. And see if there be any wicked way in me.

And lead me in the way everlasting. That's incredible verses of scripture. I was going to call this message initially the cry of a righteous man.

These are two verses of scripture that are quoted more often than many others. And I believe that they're verses of scripture that prove that David was indeed a man after God's own heart. Now, the Lord himself gave David that testimony in Acts chapter 13, verse 22.

He says, he raised up unto them David to be their king, to whom also he gave testimony and said, I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after my own heart, which shall fulfill all my will. Now, beloved, David's cry to be free from his own thoughts and his own ways. Now, the word thoughts in the original text is meditation.

And the word for way means the course or the way of life. Now, this cry stemmed from an understanding that that which came from his own being, I mean, that part of him that is devoid in a sense of the life of God, was of such little worth that it could lead to nowhere but destruction. David knew this.

And I believe that every righteous man and woman of God also has this inner knowledge. The thoughts of my own heart, if I give these place, if they begin to be the course, if I'm meditating on my own thoughts and not the thoughts of God, they will initially become the ways that I begin to walk in. Did you know that today? If you and I refuse to yield our thought life to that which God has determined and speaks in his word that he will freely give us, he said through the prophet Ezekiel, I will give you a new mind.

I'll give you a new heart. When we yield to God, God says, I promise to come into your life. I promise to reestablish your heart and to reestablish your thoughts.

And ultimately, I will give you a new course of direction for your life, which is the course that I have purposed for your life. And in addition to the new course, I will come in power and I will give you the ability to walk on that course that I have put in your heart in the first place. That's why we say here from this

pulpit continuously at Times Square Church, beloved, it is all of God and none of us.

It is all of Jesus Christ. It is all grace and not of works, lest any man should boast. This is an absolute gift of God, not just our salvation, but the ability to walk in that salvation is as much a gift as was the covering of our sins by the blood of Jesus Christ.

Hallelujah. I thank God with all my heart that God doesn't save me and then just leave me to walk this Christian walk in my own strength. For if that were the case, you know, and I know there would be no hope for any of us to arrive ever at that place that God has destined us to be through his son.

David prayed, in other words, Let not that upon which I have set my own mind find a resting place in my heart and lead me away from the life that God has destined for me. Let not my own thoughts guide me. That was David's cry when he said, Search me, O God, and know my heart.

Try me, know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me and lead me in the way everlasting. Now, it's interesting, and we'll get there eventually to note that David considered thoughts that find a lodging place in his heart, even if they may be logistical thoughts, or they might even seem to be good thoughts. Remember the time that he numbered the army.

It seemed like a harmless thing to do. They had won all kinds of victories. He just wanted to know how many men were in his army throughout the kingdom.

But it was an evil thought, and that thought caused God to have to move his hand against Israel. And, you know, a plague came, and many, many wonderful soldiers died because of the plague that came upon Israel because of a wayward thought that found a resting place. The wayward thought really was that David was beginning to focus on his own strength and was turning away from the true strength, which is the strength of God.

Now, we ask ourselves the question, really, isn't it true that for a man to forsake what he holds close, something better must come along, which gives him both the courage and the desire to release those other things? Truly, if you had \$100 in your pocket, and I was to ask you to give it to me, you might hesitate unless I held out a \$1,000 bill to you and said, OK, give me the \$100, and I'll give you \$1,000. Then all of a sudden you have a motivation to release that, which you once held dear. You held it in your pocket.

You weren't going to part with it until something better came along. Now, put a marker in Psalm 139 and go with me to Matthew, please, chapter 13 in the New Testament, if you will. Remember that principle.

Something better has to come along before we are willing to let go of what we already hold. In other words, when we're talking in the context of our thought life, something better must come along, some better thoughts than our own, something more valuable, something that can lead us to a better place, something that can purchase for us as it is a better inheritance. Again, Matthew, chapter 13, verse 44.

Jesus says again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure, which hid in a field, which when a man has found, he hides, and for joy thereof goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. Now, Jesus is saying, in other words, the man whose possession is heaven has said in his heart, I have found a place so wonderful that I must have it, no matter what the personal cost, even if it means changing occupation, changing location, whatever the situation warrants, I must have this kingdom. If you are a child of God, if you've been purchased by the blood of Jesus Christ, if indeed the Holy Spirit has come into your life, there

is a cry, the scripture says, of Abba Father.

There's a cry that God places in your heart, and that cry bears witness that you are a child of God. Now, beloved, with that cry comes another desire. The scripture says, if any man is in Christ, he becomes a new creation, a new creature.

There is a newness that comes into his life. That newness is not the old man trying to change himself from the outside in, but the newness is the presence of God coming into his life, giving him a new mind and a new heart, and absolutely new desires that, beloved, don't make any sense at all to those who are outside of the kingdom of God. It doesn't make any sense, if you're a lawyer here today, to your colleagues, to see you leaving your profession, if that's what God asks of you, and heading off to Africa to feed starving people, or whatever the situation is, or to teach in a school of the Bible.

It makes no sense to people who are outside the kingdom of God. And the only real motivating factor that can cause you and I to leave what we hold dear is that we have, in our hearts, come to an understanding that we have found something better. And we walked out into a field, as it is, you picture a man, Jesus is saying he's just going about his daily business, and he's on a journey, he's looking for something.

Walks into a field and finds an incredible treasure in this field. Now this man might have another occupation, he might be an accountant, he might be a doctor, he might be a street worker in that particular town, but for the joy, Jesus said in his heart, of what he has found in that field, he goes back and sells everything he has. He has a willingness to let it all go, that he might now possess that field, that he might go to that place which he knows there is a greater treasure.

Beloved, there's no greater treasure in the universe than yielding your life to the purposes of Almighty God. No greater treasure than to just allow Him to lead and to follow Him wherever He leads us and wherever He wants us to go. And again in verse 45, He says again, The kingdom of heaven is like a merchant man seeking goodly pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.

Now, this same man considered even one pearl. Now, I take that in this context that I'm speaking of today to be one article of truth that issues from the heart of God. We come into the kingdom of God with many ideas.

We come into the kingdom of God with the idea that an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth is still the standard for today. We come into the kingdom of God with some false ideas about prosperity and what that is all about. We come into the kingdom of God with wrong ideas about who is really in control of our lives once we yield our lives to Jesus Christ.

But this same man considers these pearls that God gives to him worth forsaking. He found a pearl and Jesus said he felt that that pearl was worth forsaking all that he had to possess it. And many here today, you've received title to the kingdom of heaven and the evidence of that is your willingness to forsake your thoughts and your ways to possess those of God.

This is the evidence. Folks, I want to tell you something. Coming to an altar here when you hear a message is not just a religious thing that you do because you attend Times Square Church.

In some cases it might be. But in the majority of cases, it's an evidence that the kingdom of God has come within you. And really what is it that you're doing when you get up out of your seat and you come to this

altar whether it's a physical act or whether it's just something that you do in your heart whether it's something you agree with.

You come to the house of God and God sets before you a pearl. A pearl of great price. And in your heart because the kingdom of God is now in you.

Jesus said the kingdom of God is like this. He's not giving an absolute illustration but it's a typology. And every time you come to the house of God and God begins to speak a truth that is contrary to a belief that you're holding in your heart.

Do you understand? You're coming into the house of God and God's word is proving you and reproofing you. You're standing in the light of Almighty God and God begins to speak about something from His word. And as you're sitting here you say, Oh God, I didn't know that I'm holding in my heart something contrary to the truth that is being presented to me.

The evidence that you belong to the kingdom of God is that you're willing to forsake that. You're willing to throw that thing to the ground where it belongs and run into the presence of God and obtain that pearl of great price. If you are a child of God you consider every line in this Bible a pearl of great price.

Every word that comes from the mouth of God. There's an understanding in your heart that we no longer live by bread alone but we live by every word that comes from the mouth of God. Hallelujah! I tell you when I got saved and I used to take my police car and I remember praying for rainy days because I worked radar when I first got saved.

And I used to pray for rainy days because our radar was old fashioned. It didn't work in the rain. And so I used to ask God let it rain today so I can park behind some warehouse somewhere and I'd open my Bible and I'd get into it.

Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and I'd have to get on a cloth oftentimes and wipe my face because I had found what I'd been looking for all my life. Every line was like a wave of glory. Every word was truth.

It was renewing my heart, renewing my mind. I had found a pearl of great price and God was leading me by His grace to a place where I'd be willing to forsake it all. All of the old thoughts, all of the old learning, all of the old knowledge, all of the old ways that I might possess this which comes from the mind of God.

For, beloved, that's where life is. That's where strength is. That's where hope is.

That's where the newness of life is that God speaks about when we are willing to forsake the old and to lay hold of the new. That's why Paul says put off the old man with all of his thoughts and all of his deeds and put on the new man. Oh, hallelujah.

Put on the new man by the grace of Almighty God, by the power of God. Be clothed with this new man that is created in the image of Jesus Christ. That's why, for example, bitterness and unforgiveness I have often found is one of the most besetting sins in the Christian church.

But Paul says in Ephesians 31, 32, Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and evil speaking be put away from you with all malice and be ye kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven you. If you and I are truly children of God, we will consider this

truth a pearl, a pearl that we take and we're willing to forsake and sell off every other truth, every other thought. We're willing to put it away from us and lay hold of this pearl of truth.

They say, my God, by the grace that you've given me in Jesus Christ, by the power you've given me of the Holy Spirit, by the direction you've given me in the Word of God, God, I'm believing that you're going to enable me to lay down all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and evil speaking, all malice put away from my heart and, Lord Jesus, you are kind, God, you are kind to me because of Jesus Christ and you now are going to let that life that you have infused and joined together with my life and you're going to teach me how to be kind and tenderhearted even as you have been kind and tenderhearted to me. Hallelujah. I have found a pearl of great price and I'm willing to sell off everything I have that I may possess that pearl and that pearl may be the very source of the treasure of my heart and my life.

Now, listen, there's a cry in the heart of God. If you go back with me to Isaiah, please. You go to Psalms, Proverbs, Isaiah.

Isaiah chapter 55. Listen to the cry in the heart of God for his children. Isaiah 55 verse 5. This is what God desires to do for you and for me.

Verse 5 says, Behold, thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not and nations that knew not thee shall run unto thee because of the Lord thy God and for the Holy One. God says there are people that didn't know me but they're going to hear my voice and when they hear my voice they're going to come running to me. That's the evidence of conversion, beloved.

There is no other evidence. That's the initial evidence. I don't care what anybody says.

It's not necessarily other things. The initial evidence is not necessarily going to church. Anybody can do it.

Any devil can go to church. But the evidence of a conversion is that when God speaks, you run. When God speaks, you get up.

When God speaks, you acknowledge that your position, if it's apart from the position of God's truth, is worthless. It is futile. These are thoughts that emanate from the human heart and can only lead to destruction.

There's a cry in your heart like it was in the cry of David. It said, God, put away from me all of these wicked thoughts and these wicked ways and lead me in the way of life everlasting. Verse 6 is, Seek ye the Lord while he may be found and call upon him while he is near.

Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts and let him return unto the Lord and he will have mercy upon him for and to our God for he will abundantly pardon. God says, I will abundantly forgive you. I will release you from your transgressions.

But there has to be something in your heart. There has to be a cry that says, God, I don't want to live in unrighteousness anymore. Not even in my mind.

I'm not willing to play a religious game. I'm not willing to be among those that come into the house of God and put on nice clothes and carry a big Bible but carry death in their hearts. Hidden from everyone but God.

God, I want truth in my life. I want truth and I want it to set me free. God, I want to honor you.

I want to live for you. And wherever you call me to go, that's where I'm going to go. You see, the journey is not necessarily to Africa.

The journey first is into the word of God. The journey first is into areas that we don't have the power to go but by the grace of almighty God. For my thoughts, he says, are not your thoughts.

Neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts. Now the Lord says, let this be established once and for all.

We are not meeting on level ground here. I'm not calling on people to bring their ideas into the kingdom of God. God says, I'm not interested in your ideas.

You can't even see my kingdom, let alone know how to build it. God says, I have had the blueprints of this kingdom from before you were even born. I had the blueprints.

I know how it works. I'm the Alpha and the Omega. I was here in the beginning.

I'll be here when it's all over. You are here. You stand by grace for a season.

You are a simple puff of smoke that exists for a moment and then that is gone forever. God says, my ways, my thoughts will establish my kingdom in your heart. Hallelujah.

Now God determines his intent in verse 10. For as the rain comes down and the snow from heaven and returns not there again, but waters the earth and makes it bring forth in bud that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth. It shall not return unto me void, but shall accomplish that which I please and it shall prosper in the thing whereunto I send it.

Now God says, I send the rain and the rain comes down and it waters the earth and I don't take it back again. I send it by grace and it stays and it does its job. And God says, if you will cry out to me and acknowledge my ways are higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts, I will send my word into your heart.

I will send it into your life and fruit will begin to emanate from your life and change will begin to come. Things that can only happen by the hand of God will begin to come into your life. God says, Now, here's what the end of your life will be.

Verse 12 says, You shall go out with joy. You shall go out. I think the mark of a true Christian is that moment that God calls you home and you know that there's no ambulance going to arrive in time to save you.

That you can go out with joy. I think of that dear saint of God, Ira Stanfield, who's written a lot of the hymns that we sing here, oft times in the church. He washed my eyes with tears is one of his hymns.

He's written beautiful, beautiful songs that we sing today. He had a heart attack just, I think it was in 1988 and he knew he was going home to be with the Lord. He laid down on the couch, his wife gathered with him, his daughter with him and he worshipped God as he passed out of this world and into eternity.

What a wonderful sign of a life that has been yielded to the Lord where God has done a wonderful work. He wrote songs that came out of a... He had a hard life, folks. It wasn't an easy life.

In the early part of his years, he was young in ministry and his wife backslid and just ended up getting killed. It was a terrible, terrible time in his life and out of those experiences, he wrote beautiful hymns that we even continue to sing today in the house of the Lord. But he was led, you shall go out with joy.

It has a dual application, obviously. You're going to go out of places of death and you're going to go out with joy because you know the power of God is in your life. The power of God will keep you and when it comes time to breathe your last breath, you're going to go out of this world with joy because you've already exchanged your citizenship from this world into another kingdom.

Hallelujah. Hallelujah. And be led forth with peace.

God says, you'll not only go out with joy, but I'm going to lead you with peace. Mark the end. The Scripture says of the perfect man, the end of that man is peace.

God says, mark the man. Mark the woman that I have done a work in. Mark the person that has opened their heart and yielded to my word and to the power of my Spirit.

Mark the person who has entered into my rest. The end of that man is peace. Irrespective of what comes against them, their heart is fixed.

They trust in God. They're not afraid of evil tidings. They're established on a rock.

Their way is set. There is a firmness in their voice, even in affliction, even in times of trial and difficulty that come to everybody. They are not moved by it.

There is a peace, an inward peace in their heart that enables them to say with truth and veracity, God is in control of everything in my life. Hallelujah. Hallelujah.

The mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing. I see that as all the difficult places. God says, if you'll open your heart to my word and to my ways, all those places that once before seemed an impossibility to you, all of a sudden you're going to walk right through the midst of them and they have to part ways and they're going to worship just along with you.

You're going to have a song as you go through these difficult times. I'm going to take you through and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Verse 13 says, instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree and instead of the briar shall come up the myrtle tree and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.

God says now, instead of bearing thorns, you're going to bear fruit. Instead of bramble, there's going to be beautiful fruit that appears upon you, not just for your sake, but for the sake of those that are around you. And also too, he says, God says, I'm going to do something in your life that will be an everlasting sign that will not be there be no end to what I'm going to do in your life.

Hallelujah. Hallelujah. Hallelujah.

Now, David, the psalmist, had an intimate personal knowledge of verse 9, which says as far as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts are higher than your thoughts. Now, let's go back to Psalm 139 again. I want to show you why David ends that psalm with a cry.

Why does David say, search me, oh God, and know my heart and try me and know my thoughts and see if there be any wicked way in me and lead me in the way everlasting. It's almost like a signature cry at the end of a marvelous psalm, Psalm 139. Now, David had a revelation in this psalm, which you and I would be well to share in today.

David says, listen to what David, listen to the knowledge that David has of God. It's an incredible thing when we see it. Verse 1, he says, Oh Lord, thou hast searched me and known me.

Folks, settle the issue today. God knows everything about you. Everything.

He has a dossier in heaven. The scripture says, he knows all the hairs on your head. He knows how many there are.

He knows how many are fake and how many are real here today. Every hair on your head is counted. He knows it.

Settle it. He knows everything that's inside of you. Nothing is hidden from God.

God's eyes are an incredible x-ray machine that literally looks through everything right to the thoughts and intents of the heart. That's what the scripture says. He knows everything about you.

David said in verse 2, Thou knowest my down sitting and my up rising. Thou understand my thought afar off. David said, you know what I'm doing when I'm sitting down.

You know what I'm doing when I'm getting up. And you know my thoughts. If you look in other translations, it says, you know my thoughts even before I think them.

You know what they are. Even before I think a thought. That's why the scripture says, God can do exceeding above and beyond all that we even ask or think.

God knows our need before we even become aware of it. God is aware of it. He's already moving his hand and often times when we agree with him in prayer, we're just simply agreeing with what he's already determined to do in our lives from even before the foundation of the world.

Listen to what David says in verse 3, Thou compass my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways. It's settled. David says, no matter where I go, that's where you are.

Not only are you there, but you surround me everywhere I go any time of the day. You are even when I lie down, you're there. You know what I'm thinking.

You know what I'm doing. And you are acquainted. In other words, you are absolutely familiar with all of my ways.

For there is not a word, verse 4, in my tongue, but lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether. God, even before I speak, you have such an intimate knowledge of my heart. You know what it is I'm going to say.

Talk about the, we use a big word called omniscience of God. It means God knows everything. He knows everything.

There's nothing that God doesn't know. And David had that revelation. He says, you are so there that, now listen, verse 5, he says, you beset me behind and before and laid your hand upon me.

He says, you're not only before me, you're behind me and you're above me and you're underneath me and you're all around me. That's an incredible thing. And David says, you've laid your hand upon me, not to hurt me.

No, it's not a hand of judgment. It's a hand of mercy. David is saying, God, even though you know me, still you touch me.

Still you bless me. Still you put your hand on me. Even though you know me.

Talk about grace. Oh, beloved, we can't hide a single thing from God and how foolish to ever think we could. But in spite of all of our weaknesses and all of our struggles and all of the trials we go through, God still, even though He knows everything, places His hand upon us.

Hallelujah. For good and not for evil. Such knowledge, verse 6, he says, is too wonderful for me.

It is high and I cannot attain to it. David is looking at his own heart and no doubt as most do, like the Apostle Paul said, O wretched man that I am, seeing all his shortcomings and all his failings, says, My God, how is it that you still want to be around me? How is it, O God, that you still want to touch me? You're acquainted with me. You know everything about me, but yet still your hand of goodness is on me.

Your love surrounds me. O God, I don't understand it. It's so high, the depth of your love.

It's so broad. It's so wide. It's so deep.

I can't attain to it. My mind is too small. I don't understand it, O God.

But it is a marvelous thing. It's a wonderful thing that you love me so much. Hallelujah.

Then David says in verse 7, Whither shall I go from thy spirit? Or whither shall I flee from thy presence? Now there's... David said, How can I get away from you? Or in other words, you can look at it this way. He said, God, you have been so good to me. You have been so good to me.

How could I ever... Why would I ever want to get away from you? Why would I want to flee from you? And even if I did, where am I going to go? How am I going to get away from the God that created the universe? If I send up into heaven, David says, you're there. If I make my bed in hell, behold, the heart there. And David is saying in the highs and in the lows, you never fail me.

When I've had a wonderful day and I'm on the mountaintop, you're there. But when it seems like I've made my bed in hell, when I go home at night and it's been the worst day of my life, you are still there. You are still with me.

Oh, I love it. Don't you love it? You are still there. Still there.

You're not a fickle puff of smoke that flees every time I say a wrong thing or have a... Some people have that impression of God, you know. Every time you do some wrong thing, oh, there he goes. The Holy Spirit is grieved.

He's gone. So we get on our knees and pray a dozen prayers. He's back.

He's back. We have a bad thought. We think a wrong thing.

Oh, he's gone again. Oh, how foolish. How ignorant of the ways of God.

David said, even if I make my bed in hell, you are there. If I've had the worst day of my life, you are a friend that sticks closer than a brother. Hallelujah.

If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me and thy right hand shall hold me. David is saying, even when I feel like I am far away from you. And you are still holding me up because it has nothing to do with how I feel.

You have made a commitment to me that goes beyond my understanding. And I feel sometimes you're a million miles away, but that's just my feeling. It has no basis in reality.

You are still here. You are still with me. Hallelujah.

How close is God? Well, the Bible says he's close enough to hold him up with his right hand. That's how close he is. If I say, verse 11, surely the darkness shall cover me.

Even the night shall be light about me. David is saying, if in my heart I'm trying to flee from God even, or if I get to the place where darkness is so surrounding me that I feel like I'm going to get swallowed of my enemies. He said, but you are there with me and darkness is nothing to you.

Darkness is just like light to you, almighty God. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee, verse 12, but the night shineth as the day and the darkness and the light are both alike to me. Verse 13.

For thou has possessed my reins, thou has covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise thee for I'm fearfully and wonderfully made. Marvelous are thy works and that my soul knoweth right well.

My substance was not hid from thee when I was made in secret and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance yet being unperfect. And in thy book all my members were written, which in continuous were fashioned when as yet there was none of them.

Now this is an incredible passage of scripture. And folks, I want you to know something. You are not an accident.

Even if the devil would have you to think so, the Bible declares that you were in God's mind and in his book even before you began to be formed in your mother's womb. Before you began to be formed, the Bible says there was a book and all your members, that means every part of you was written down. There was something in the mind of God.

He was thinking about you even before you were formed in your mother's womb. God was thinking about you. Hallelujah.

Hallelujah. Hallelujah. That is an incredible thing.

David says, you knew who I was. You knew what I was going to be. You knew what my heart was going to be like.

And even before I was in my mother's womb, you knew who I was and what I was going to be. That's an incredible thing when you think of it. How precious.

Verse 17. He says, are thy thoughts unto me? That word unto can be translated towards me, O God. And how great is the sum of them.

If I could count them, they are more in number than the sand. When I awake, I am still with thee. David is saying in verse 17, Mighty God.

Mighty God, who compasses me above and beneath. Who walks with me through good times and bad times. Mighty God, who knows me intimately and yet still loves me.

Mighty God, who keeps his hand upon me in spite of my frailties and my weaknesses. Mighty God, who is equated with all my ways. So equated that you knew me even before I was formed in my mother's womb.

You knew me. Mighty God, you have thoughts. You have precious thoughts to me, O God.

There are so many of these thoughts. He says, how great is the sum of them. Did you know that today, beloved? That before you were formed in your mother's womb, God was thinking about you.

And he had thoughts for you. He had a plan. He had a destiny for your life.

Even before you were formed. Don't let the devil tell you there is no purpose for you here on this earth. Don't let people bind you by telling you things that bring limitations into your life and your service to God.

God said, I had thoughts towards you from before you were even formed in your mother's womb. Hallelujah. David says, if I could count them, they're more in number than the sand.

Think of this for a moment. All the thoughts that God has towards you, they're more than the sand on the seashore. And when I awake, he says, I am still with thee.

The translation of that verse, let me just read it to you from the Living Bible. Here's what it says. How precious is it, Lord, to realize that you are thinking about me constantly? I can't even count how many times a day your thoughts turn towards me.

And when I wake up in the morning, you are still thinking of me. That's what David was saying. You are still thinking of me even when I sleep.

You never stop thinking about me. You have thoughts in your heart concerning my life. Did you know that today? You have to understand that or you can't trade in what you have for the kingdom of God.

God has thoughts that he's been thinking about your life. Even when you're sleeping, God doesn't stop thinking about you. He declares, he makes a declaration of his thoughts in Jeremiah 29, 11.

He said, for I know the thoughts that I think towards you, says the Lord. Thoughts of peace and not of evil to give you an expected end. God says, I have thoughts for your life.

And my thoughts, if you will allow them to be planted within your life, will create my ways. And my thoughts and my ways will bring you to the end in a sense that I have destined for your life. God says, I have a destiny for you.

And if you will allow my thoughts and allow my ways to be entrenched in your heart, they will ultimately just simply carry you to that destiny. You will become all that I have intended you to be. Hallelujah.

Hallelujah. Now, David goes into something that seems to be almost a divergence in this psalm, but it really isn't. He says, surely, verse 19, thou will slay the wicked, O God.

Depart from me, therefore, you bloody men. For they speak against thee wickedly, and thine enemies take thy name in vain. Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate thee? And am I not grieved with those that rise up against thee? I hate them with perfect hatred.

I count them mine enemies. Now, David is saying in this particular passage, when he says, depart from me, you bloody men, he's saying basically the ignorant and the foolish and the life-robbing, the soul-damning thoughts of those who don't know God. I don't want them to be any part of my life.

I don't want the ways of the natural man. I don't want the advice of man. I don't want the counsel of man.

I don't want the thoughts of man. I don't want the plans of man. I don't want anything to do with man.

And he begins to categorize them. He says, surely, basically saying in verse 19, the thoughts of the wicked will slay themselves because they fail to yield to you. So they're patterning the path of their own destruction, those that choose to dwell in wickedness.

And then he says, depart from me, therefore, you bloody men, those that are guilty in a sense of the blood of Jesus Christ. We could say in this generation, those that trample underfoot the mercy of the Son of God and the grace of the Son of God. David says, depart from me.

I want no part of this. For they speak against thee wickedly. Now, there are, you know, a person may not feel that they're speaking wickedly against God.

But folks, I want to tell you something. When we are giving counsel that is contrary to the Word of God, that is, the Bible would clearly declare that as wicked speaking against the Word of God. When we are counseling somebody to do something that God says is wrong or God says will not lead to righteousness.

Depart from me, he says, and thine enemies take thy name in vain. In other words, they take your name and they make it a worthless thing. It doesn't mean cursing God.

It can have that context, I suppose. But taking the name of the Lord thy God in vain is taking upon yourself the name of Jesus Christ and making it a reproach to the people that live around you. That's what taking his name in vain really is all about.

Saying I belong to Jesus, but your actions, the conversation, thought process, direction of life, says everything else and makes a reproach of his name. It's like a woman taking on a man's name in marriage and then continuing on with her other lovers. She has taken his name in vain.

She's not cleaving to him. She truly hasn't become one with him. She's not bringing honor to her husband.

She's a reproach to her husband and she's a reproach to the vow and the name that has been placed upon her. And that's what David says. David is saying, God, I don't want to be part of those that come into your house and take your name and say, Jehovah God, we belong to God.

Or in our case in the New Testament, Jesus Christ is my Lord and my Savior. But yet their actions, their thoughts, the meditations of their heart, the directions of their feet prove that they have taken your name in vain. They've taken it for nothing upon themselves.

Their lives bring nothing but reproach to the testimony of Jesus Christ. Oh, he says, do not I hate them. He's not talking about the people necessarily here.

He's talking about the thoughts. He's talking about the very essence of the falseness of their lives. I hate it, God.

Am I not grieved with those that rise up against thee? He says, I hate it with a perfect hatred and I count them mine enemies. Then he goes on to say, search me, O God, and know my heart. Try me and know my thoughts and see if there's any wicked way in me and lead me in the way everlasting.

That's why there's that cry in the heart of David. He says, God, I'm not interested in playing a game. I know who you are.

I know what you want to do in my life. Oh, God, let not the ways of the wicked be found in me. Let them not be established in me.

Mighty God, let me not walk this way that brings reproach to your name. Oh, Jesus, let your ways be my ways. Let your thoughts be my thoughts.

You promise nothing but good for my life. But, oh, God, I don't want this in my life. I don't want these ways.

I don't want these thoughts in my life or in my heart. Now, go with me quickly. We'll close in Luke chapter 14.

Luke chapter 14. That's why David cries, search me, O God. Search me, O God.

Search me, O God. Don't let this be found in me. Know my thoughts.

Try me. Know my heart. See if there be any wicked way in me.

And lead me in the way everlasting. Luke chapter 14, beginning at verse 26. Jesus said, If any man come to me and hate not his father and his mother and wife and children and brethren and sisters, yea, in his own life also he cannot be my disciple.

Now, until we understand the context of what we're speaking about today, then this seems to be a strange verse. God, you're telling me to love everybody. You're telling me to love my enemies even.

And now here you say that he's not talking about hating people. What Jesus is saying, If any man come to me and does not hate the ways of, that's the context of this particular passage of Scripture. And is not willing to distance himself from the thoughts that have been entrenched in him.

The reasoning patterns, the ways of selfishness and self-indulgence, all these other things that are found in the lives of those who don't know God. That's why Christ goes on to say in other passages of Scripture, A man's enemies will end up being those of his own house. Because the man has come to Christ, the woman has come to Christ and says, God, I am separating myself by the grace of God from the ways of the ungodly.

I'm separating myself from the reasoning of the ungodly. And God, I'm going to begin to walk with you, and I'm going to begin to walk in your kingdom, and you're going to do in my life everything that you said you're going to do. But folks, I want to tell you something.

Many of you have found this out. You go home with the greatest news that you've ever been given in all of eternity. Mom, dad, brothers, sisters, I'm saved.

I found Jesus as my Savior. He's the Son of God. He came, He died on a cross to give us life.

I yielded my life to Him and God came into my life, and I feel different and God is changing me and I'm so excited. And they just sit there and look at you. And not just all times and indifference, but a rage begins to come up in the heart.

How dare you? I raised you to be a good religious person. How dare you forsake the business of your father? How dare you cast off the counsel of your mother? How dare you? What's wrong with going to a bar with your brother? He needs help right now. No, Jesus said, no, there's a difference.

There's a difference. A man comes to me and he says, I want no more counsel of the ungodly. As much as I love, as Jesus says, I'm to love everyone.

I hate those things that are contrary to the Word of God that are found in the hearts of even those that can be closest to us. And whosoever does not bear his cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. Then he goes on, he says, for which of you intending to build a tower sits not down first and counts the cost, whether we have sufficient to finish it.

Blessed happily after he has laid the foundation and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, saying this man began to build it and was not able to finish. Jesus was saying, count the cost. If you attempt to build a Christian life and you want to hang on to your own thoughts and infuse them into what really can only come from my hand, you're not going to be able to finish the work.

You're going to start up with a great boast of where you're going. You're going to talk about the journey and talk about the trip. And people will sit there and listen to you.

But if you will not forsake your ways and forsake your thoughts, my kingdom cannot come in power. And the end result of your life is all of those that you testified to about the presence of God, the saving power of God will mock you. They will mock you because you began to build and because you would not release that which you once had and lay hold of that which I want to give you.

You could not finish what you began to build because it can't be built with your thoughts and your ideas. And he goes on again, he says, what king going to make war against another king? Sits not down first and consults whether he be able with 10,000 to meet him that comes against him with 20,000. Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends ambassadors and desires conditions of peace.

That's the second stage of the Christian life who doesn't yield to God. And Christ goes on and says, He's not talking about material goods, folks, here. He's talking about that which we possess.

That's what we trusted in. That which we thought would give us life and give us hope. The value systems that we bring into the kingdom of God that are contrary to the word of God.

He's talking about the person who comes in and thinks it still can be self-will, can still build the kingdom of God. Self-thought, self-indulgence and all that goes with the flesh and the natural man. He said, whoever he be of you that forsake is not all that he has.

He cannot. He's not simply barring the door and saying, no, unless you forsake everything, you can't follow me. The legalists love that.

They'll take that and they'll preach that and condemn the whole audience with it. That's not what he's saying. He's just making a declaration of the impossibility.

He's not shutting the door to anybody. He says, unless this kingdom, you cannot come. You cannot come.

You cannot walk in it. Basically, it's like a traffic cop saying, if you decide today to drive on the left side of the road, you cannot make it home. It's as simple as that.

Christ saying there's a way that seems right unto a man, but the ends thereof are the ways of death. You cannot make it home if you go your own way. There's a prescribed way.

There are thoughts that I have. There are plans that I have. There are ways that I want to take you.

And if you don't go that way, you cannot. It's a simple statement of truth. You cannot be my disciple.

There's no chance. There's no hope. There's no power.

The end result, verse 31, he says, if you sit down and consult with yourself as it is or consult with God, and God begins to say, you don't have what it takes to come against what will come against you as a Christian. You don't have what it takes to get through this life. You need something greater than yourself.

Or else, he says, if you don't let it go, while the other king is yet a great way off, you will send ambassadors of peace and desire conditions of peace. In other words, he says, if you don't trust me, if you don't lean to me and trust me, he said, you will make peace with your sin. Some will end up a mockery, and others will make peace with their sin.

But there's a third type of person, like the psalmist David, a man after God's heart that will say, Search me, God. Search me, Lord. Try me.

Know my thoughts and my ways, and see if there be any wicked way in me. Folks, sometimes we think the ways that we're walking are pretty good. But God searches us.

And when he searches us, we begin to find out it's not as pretty as we thought it was. We begin to find out that our plans are not his plans, and our thoughts are not his thoughts. And sometimes our ways are not his ways.

But David's cry was, Lead me in the way of life everlasting. Mighty God, there's just something about the man or woman that says, God, I don't have the sense to even get through life, let alone the Christian life. But Lord Jesus, I'm putting my hand in your hand, and I'm trusting, Lord, that you're going to lead me through this life.

As I have a yielded heart, as I don't harden myself to the word of God, when I come to the house of God, or I open my Bible to have personal devotions, I'm not trying to deflect truth away from my life, but I'm embracing truth. And I'm saying to that truth, Search me. Search me.

There's a willingness in me to lay down my old value system, my old way of thinking, that all things in me might become new, and that you may lead me on that path to bearing fruit, to going out with joy, being led

forth with peace. All the things around me that once caused opposition, now breaking forth into singing. There's a cry in the righteous man or woman of God that says, Let me not be held by sin.

Let it not hold my heart. Let it not hold my mind any longer. Let me not be captivated by darkness.

And folks, the longer you let darkness rule, the more the chance is that you will make peace with it. It will begin to reason with you, and over a period of time, you will have so hardened your heart, that you're calling evil good and good evil. Folks, it happens.

The prophet Isaiah warned about it. I've met Christians like that, who have an evil heart, and they call it good, because they justify it. There are racists, you know, in the kingdom of God, who think they're going into heaven, but they're sadly mistaken.

Any man who says he hates his brother, and says he loves God, this creator says is a liar. Let it be established once and for all, is a liar, and the truth of God is not in him. There's no way getting around that truth, folks.

I'm telling you, you try all you want, you can't get around it. You can't fool God. Remember, David says he knows everything.

He knows everything in the heart. There's nothing about us that God doesn't know. You see the danger of courting with these thoughts, the danger of not yielding them to the truth of Almighty God.

I would be a false shepherd, were I to stand here and not warn you, some of you in this house today, that the kingdom of heaven is not yours, if you are regarding some of these things in your heart, and you have hardened yourself to the word of God, the kingdom of heaven is not yours. The scripture says clearly, if you do not forgive your brother his trespasses, neither will your heavenly father forgive yours. Tell me, how will you get around that when you stand before God someday? How will you circumvent that truth, which is as sure as the law of gravity? As sure as if you jump off the top of the Empire State Building, you're going to be a mess when you hit the bottom.

As surely as that's going to happen, God says, I will not, your heavenly father will not forgive, if you don't forgive. There is no getting around it. But the righteous man of God says, Oh God, don't let me be held by sin any longer.

Don't let me be substituting my ways for your ways, and my thoughts for your thoughts. The heavens are higher than the earth, and your ways are so much higher than mine. Oh God, let me not live below your destiny for my life.

God has a destiny. He's been thinking about you from before eternity. Don't live below it, folks.

Don't live below it. That's about the easiest way. Oh yeah, you can live below it and get into heaven.

But it's sad. I guess that's the only way I can say it. It's sad.

Because God's desire is to establish you and I as a testimony of His grace and glory in the earth. His desire is to establish us as a light set upon a hill, that people who live in darkness can actually see it. And say, the Lord, He is God.

The Lord, He is God. Because of the power of God in your life. Just like in Elijah's day.

Not because you can sing songs and have a certain profession, but the evidence is there. The kingdom has come. The kingdom of God is there and it is really moving in your life.

And people see it and they have to come to a declaration. That's why David said, God put a new song and people will see it and fear and will trust in the Lord. The cry of the righteous man is, Lord, let not ignorance of the ways of God abide in me.

Let me never say God doesn't care. Let me never say God doesn't see. Let me never say God has no plan that includes me.

Let me never say He doesn't hold the keys to my freedom and to my life, because He does. He holds the keys to everything. Hallelujah.

Hallelujah. David said, search me, oh God. If I could attribute one thing to the Christian growth that I've known, let me be very clear, I've not arrived by any stretch.

I've got a long way to go. I could say like Paul, I've not attained, but I do press on to the mark of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. But if I can attain one thing to the places that God has been able to captivate and establish Himself in my life, it's that cry.

Just a few years into my walk with God, that cry came into my heart. Search me, oh God. I want your ways, I don't want my ways.

And it's not always easy. Some of those ways are hard to let go of. They're deep in us.

They're deep. They've entrenched themselves into our hearts. Even sometimes self-perspectives about who we are and what we will accomplish or achieve in our lives.

God says, I need to take it all away. You need to yield it all. The bad things as well as some even the good things that you think are in your life.

I need to get it all out of the way so that my kingdom can come and be established in your life. But I have to say today, it was that cry that began to make the difference. And I want to just issue an appeal today for many who are here.

If you will let God, He will break the chains of sin. He will break old fears and bondages. I don't know why the Holy Spirit has had me really hammer home bitterness and unforgiveness.

Perhaps that's what God sees today. He doesn't see the way man sees. He looks at the heart, the scripture says.

And perhaps He's just seen a lot of people here today who have not been willing to forgive those that have wronged them. You can't grow with unforgiveness in your heart. You'll still be saying the same old stuff 20 years from now.

You will not have grown one inch in the grace of Almighty God. David says, I know your thoughts. Do you know his thoughts today? Do you understand how much God loves you? The plan he has for your life and the education he has.

Do you know it today? He has an incredible plan for your life. Things that he wants to do. But there has to be that willingness to lay aside and to put away the old ways of thinking.

And let all things be made new. And God says, if you'll just open your heart. Not only will I give you the new thoughts, I will give you the power to walk in them.

God says, I will do it all. Just give me your heart. Just give me that cry for me to search your heart.

Father, I thank you that you've enabled me today to deliver your heart. To your beloved bride. Your beloved church.

That you love Lord Jesus with all your heart. God, I'm asking today that you give us the heart of a righteous man. Give us the cry that you put upon David.

You said he was a man after your own heart. I pray that that would be that which is written in heaven about us. Lord, that we would be a people that have a search and a cry for truth and for righteousness.

I want to ask today, just before we stand. I'm going to give an altar call for all those who are having difficulty laying down besetting attitudes of heart. Besetting attitudes lead to besetting sin.

I know that. If you come to lay down the sin and you don't get to the attitude that the rotten fruit will just grow all over again. The besetting attitude.

Now, I know the Holy Spirit. I could name a dozen things. But the Holy Spirit is speaking to hearts here today.

Attitudes of unforgiveness. Envy and greed. There's other things like that.

Ambition. Fear. These things, God says, if you lay them down, I'll give you new thoughts, a new mind, a new heart.

I will establish you in my ways and I will lead you in the way of life everlasting. Let's stand together as we sing a worship chorus in the balcony. You can make your way down here.

Just go to either exit, main sanctuary, slip out of wherever you are. Now, make your way to the altar. We're going to pray together right now and believe God.

Let's believe him for freedom today. Now, how many can say today, Pastor Carter, I would love to have this new life. But I'm not even saved.

The good news for you today is that Jesus Christ came to this earth. The Son of God became, God became a man. And he walked through this world.

And he became familiar as he already was with all of our struggles and failings and sufferings. And then he took them all to a cross and took them all upon himself. That's how much he loves us.

Then he called us to himself and he said, come follow me, but not in our strength. He said, I'll give you the strength. The Holy Ghost will come to you and give you the power and you shall be a witness to me.

But you can't know that strength and that power until your sins are forgiven. You have to acknowledge that you're a sinner and acknowledge that God came in his mercy and became a man and took your place on a

cross. And open your heart to him and allow him to come in and to be your Lord and Savior.

That is the greatest decision you will ever make, my friend, in your life. There'll never be a greater decision than that. There's no business, there's no travel, there's no family thing.

There's nothing you'll ever make that will top this one you're about to make today. This is the decision that determines your eternity. And not just what you become on the earth, but where you spend eternity.

God so loved the world that he gave his only Son that whoever believes in him should not die. That means in their sin or not be cast away from God, but should have everlasting life. God said, I love you.

I love you. I had plans for you from before you were formed in your mother's womb. I have loved you with an everlasting love, enough that I would die for you.

All God asks is that would you live for me? Would you give me your life? Would you give me your heart? Would you let my kingdom as it is come into your life? Would you let my truth now be your guide? Would you let my Holy Spirit be the power that leads you? Would you let your lips start speaking that which is eternal and everlasting and put away that which comes from the heart of man? Will you open your heart today and receive me? That's what the Lord would say to you today from his word. Would you open your heart and receive me as your Lord and your Savior? God says, I will change you. I will change you.

I will make you into another man, another person. I will change you. I will take the old things away.

It's not about you. It's about me. It's what I've determined to do in your life.

And you will become that which I destined you to be from before even the foundation of the world. I had a plan for your life. And if that's you today, I'm going to ask unashamedly, men, women, young people that are in this sanctuary, unashamedly to raise your hand with me right now, your right hand, and say, I'm a sinner.

I'm coming to God. I'm tired of living in sin. I want to be saved.

Raise it up nice and high. Nice and high. All over.

I'm coming to God. Up in the balcony. You may not be here.

It doesn't matter. Raise your hand up in the back. Go ahead.

Don't be ashamed. He's not ashamed of you. Raise your hand up.

So I'm giving my life to Jesus. Hallelujah. Hallelujah.

Nothing blesses my heart more than to see young men here, young ladies coming to God, giving their lives to Christ. There's no greater thing in the kingdom than young people that are yielding and saying, God, thank you, Lord, for delivering me from a life of futile pursuits. And now you're bringing me and those that are older coming to the Lord.

God loves you. Thank God that you're here. Thank God it's not over.

God still has a plan for your life and still wants to do something through your life. My father-in-law got saved at 60. I think it was about 60 years of age.

He's 82 now. And you would be amazed at the fruit that God has borne through this man's life since he was 60 years of age. The number of churches and Christians that have been encouraged and established and God has used them powerfully.

I want to encourage you. My mother-in-law, too, the very same thing. God has used this couple.

I love them with all my heart because they yielded their lives to God and became a living testimony laid in life of what God can do. If you were at a video and you could see it, you'd be amazed. God has been so good to them.

Hallelujah. Hallelujah. I'm going to pray for the benefit of all those that are coming into the kingdom of God today.

Let's pray together. Lord Jesus, I am a sinner. I thank you, Jesus, that you came to this earth and took all my sins upon yourself and took them to a cross and suffered the punishment, the separation from God that I deserve for all the wrong things that I have done.

I thank you, Lord Jesus, for dying for me. This day I open my heart. I say, Jesus, come into my life.

Be my Lord and my Savior. This is the conclusion of the message.

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