

Weapons of our Warfare

by Dean Taylor

This sermon delves into the cycle of sin and the importance of having a clear conscience before God. It emphasizes the need to heed the Holy Spirit's instructions, avoid legalism and lawlessness, and seek true repentance and accountability. The message highlights the power of God's grace to provide a way of escape from temptation and the significance of drawing near to God with a sincere heart. Ultimately, it points to the victory found in Jesus Christ's sacrifice and the testimony of believers in overcoming the enemy.

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Description

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Transcript

Well, amen. All right, well, today, I would like to get a little personal into some details of the weapons of our warfare. And in particular, I would like to look at some of these weapons that we have, and one in particular I would look at is your conscience.

And looking at your conscience, I'm going to be looking at the way the scriptures instructs us to have our conscience corrected by the word of God, and also how we can defile that, and when we do this, it can bring destruction. But when it's clear, the blessings of having a clear heaven are everything. And then also, the only way to have complete freedom from that is through the blood of Jesus Christ, and through salvation, that those things are, those sins are taken from us.

And I think if there's anything that we're gonna have for good weapons as soldiers of the Lord, it's this. And so, let's start with the word of prayer and ask the Holy Spirit, according to his promise, to work with us today, let's pray. Dear Heavenly Father, we thank you, Lord, for the Holy Spirit, and we pray, oh God, Holy Spirit God, be with us today, and fulfill your word that you said that when you come, first of all, you said if anyone asked, anyone, that you would not refuse them.

We're asking here today. And you said that when you send your Holy Spirit, that you would convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment. So Lord, we're taking this time to do inventory, to see things that you want fixed, that you want to heal, you want to touch.

And so Lord, we hand it over to you, and ask your word to be proclaimed. Let God be true, and every man a liar, starting with me. And so God, I pray that you would be glorified, and your ways lifted up.

It's in Jesus' name we pray, amen. All right, so looking at this, a few reminders. One of the ones that stood out to me from the war tactics, and the one from the ancient art of war, is that if you know the enemy, and know yourself, you need not fear the results of a hundred battles.

God cannot change the person you're pretending to be. Today we're gonna get, trying to get honest, and get off all the facade, and allow the Holy Spirit to speak to who you truly are. And these masks that all of us keep wearing, I have to strip it off all the time.

We always want to try to put a best foot forward, but that creates a mask, and it creates a shell that the Holy Spirit can't get to. The other one, so when we look at the spiritual warfare, and the armor of God, I think again of our example of Israel when they were marching forward in a right way. They were forgiven, they were faithful, they were holy, they were victorious, and they were untouchable by the demonic attacks of Satan.

And yesterday we even talked about this beautiful promise that Brother Tim gave us a little bit, that if we come out from among them, come out from the things of this world, and he will be a father to us. Therefore, having those promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. With all that, nothing of that can occur unless we start here.

Right where they started, and that journey, and remember when Balaam was trying to curse them, he looked at them and said this, he has not observed iniquity in Jacob, nor has he seen wickedness in Israel. You remember that Israel sinned and made a lot of mistakes before that. But when they were cleansed, when they were clear, that's the image that Balaam got when he looked upon them.

So today, if Balaam or some demonic cursing person was trying to look to your innermost soul, what would they see? Is this what they see? It's available to you. This is available. Let's go and look at some of this.

So as we look at the famous passages of the spiritual armor, you know the Ephesians 5 passage. Let's turn to that. Ephesians 5, verse 10.

So as the apostle Paul is giving this instruction to the Ephesians, Ephesians 5, verse 10. Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

I'm gonna touch on that word in a minute. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts, that's armies, of wickedness, spiritual armies of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the whole armor of God that you will be able to withstand in the evil day and having done all, to stand.

He's not giving us the impression that we're living a life that's just free and easy and carefree and everything. He's giving us the idea that there's an entire army of demonic attack coming against us and

he's wanting us to have that kind of attitude in our way of following him, following Christ. So then he goes on, he says this.

Stand therefore, he keeps talking. Stand. Having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all, notice all the fiery darts of the wicked, of the wicked one and take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the spirit which is the word of God, praying always in all prayer and supplication in the spirit being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints.

That's really packed, isn't it? It's really packed with the attitude of how we are to stand and he keeps emphasizing this is the recipe of how we are to stand and not to fail. One of kind of an archaic word in all that had description is the word, I think, wiles. What are wiles of the devil? What's the word wiles mean? It's sort of an archaic word.

Wiles are tricks or manipulations designed to deceive someone. So in other words, he's letting us know that not only does Satan have these armies of demonic attacks on you, but he's actually set up little tricks, little snares that you kind of accidentally fall into and that's a very scary thing. It's scary for me standing here today.

It's a scary thing. It's meant to give a caution and a fear to us, but he's given us the confidence to remember the word of God, all the attacks, all the wiles of the devil are able to be defeated when we're walking in the way he's telling us to walk. So what's a way that we can twist up the concept of grace? I think one of the snares that we have in the, one of the snares that Satan throws at the people of God is just to confuse us.

Remember the idea of yesterday with the war tactics. Take their information and twist the meaning. Grace is one of those.

Now we're saved by grace. I'm gonna show you that verse. There's nothing we can do to boast, but that grace is something that gives power to us and it changes our life or it's not real.

So do not be deceived. Listen to this passage and ponder it to the way that Satan will wanna give us and deceive and belittle and I don't know, reduce the power of that powerful word, grace. First Corinthians 6.9 warns us, do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? That's, I mean, do you get it, Corinthians? Don't be deceived.

Neither fornicators nor idolaters nor adulterers nor homosexuals nor sodomites nor thieves nor covetous nor drunkards nor revilers nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. I think that's scary. I mean, covetousness is in there.

You know, that's meant to bring us fear in a right way and then he gives us this amazing part. And such were some of you, but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of God. That's amazing, praise God.

It's God's grace and his doing that takes us out of all of those things that all of us were and takes us and makes us powerful, sanctified people of God. It's amazing. In Ephesians, he tells us, and probably one of the most remarkable passages in the New Testament, this, again, this amazing gift of both our life of a sinner and the treasure that we're given with grace.

Listen to this passage in Ephesians chapter two. And you, he made alive who were dead in trespasses and sins. Get this point, dead, absolutely dead in trespasses and sins.

That means whoever you are today, completely dead in trespasses and sins, that's the person that he wants to come and save. In which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves. And the lust of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.

Very important, he's letting us know that all of us, every one of us, were debased in our minds, that we were being led by these passions and by these lusts, and that's the carnal mind. That's the carnal person. And just like everyone else, all that we were that way.

But then he goes on, and he goes on with an amazing statement. But God, dead in trespasses and sins, dead and lost to the worlds of lust and passion, but God, who is rich in mercy, because of his great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together in Christ. By grace, you have been saved.

And raised us up together and made us, made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come, he might show the exceeding riches of his grace and his kindness towards us in Christ Jesus. Again, he repeats it, for by grace, you have been saved through faith. And that, that means that faith, is not of yourselves.

It is the gift of God. It is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

That's the Christian life. God takes you, lost and dead in sin, saves you by the blood of Jesus Christ, enters you, and puts you to work in the kingdom of God. It's amazing.

But we weren't the ways of the world anymore. We have been changed, or have you? That's the seriousness that you need to take with these things, with these passages. You know, we, I think of the things that we look at Christianity, we can get in so much trapped into legalism or lawlessness and back and forth.

And there's so many things that's typical in all of us, it's not just your generation, it's my generation, maybe even more. And when you're looking at things of holiness, or, you know, and yesterday when we were talking about come up from among them, and you maybe brought up some different topics and everything, one of the things that frequently comes up is, well, is it a sin? Was that a sin? I mean, is it a sin to do this? Is it a sin to do that? And I think of the passage frequently, all things are lawful, but not all things edify. And if there's something that's maybe even okay, but if it's weighing you down, then that's a problem.

Look at this passage in Hebrews chapter 12, verse one. It's really important that you make the distinguishing, catch the point that the apostle, that the writer is saying here. Hebrews 12, one.

Therefore, oh, one thing before I read it. I want you to notice the we and the ours I underlined. We're in this together and we need each other and we need those who went on before us.

So let's read that, Hebrews 12, verse one. Therefore, we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and the sin which so easily ensnares us and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. I remember when my dear wife was in basic training.

I should have brought a picture of that. I'll try to show you, but she was something. She, don't let her fool you with that small thing.

She learned how to do claymore mines and she's a scored expert on grenade throwing and also was able to shoot an M16 machine gun. Don't let Tanya fool you, but she tells a story that when she was running on the rifle range once, so you have these, you know, camouflaged things with pockets here and in this pocket, she had an entire full canteen of water and in this one, a poncho all folded up and they were running and everything and she said, I was just feeling so tired, I couldn't keep up. Usually, she was actually at the lead of the running.

She was with the fast guys in her run, but now she was behind and everything and she went, oh, I'm weighted down. She took out her canteen and took out her poncho and then she beat all the fast guys again, but this is an example. When we're running with baggage, that could be spiritual baggage like what Brother Tim was helping us to try to get rid of this morning or it's also usually probably what the writer of Hebrew is specifically talking about things is the things that maybe aren't necessarily sin, but they're weights, they're getting you, they're defeating you and they're preventing you from running the race that's set before you.

You know, I talked about in the previous messages in all of human history, the idea is just keep the masses content with bread and circuses. Give them enough bread and circuses and they'll never revolt. The whole mass world is very bent.

They have to keep the mass majority of the world content with a little enough entertainment and a little enough food. But once we lose the entertainment or lose the food, people start to riot. We saw that a few years ago.

And so you gotta keep the masses pacified. That's what's out there. It's been out there since ancient Roman times.

And you can get weighed down by all of these little amusements. Maybe none of them are a particular sin in and of itself, but just walking through all that just brings you down. And I brought these slides the other day.

There's so much more right around the horizon of different ways for us just to be entertained and lost in a world. Amusement, bread and circuses. I look at this passage in that thought and it speaks specifically of, well, let me just read it to you.

Ephesians 5.15. Again, this idea of the spiritual soldier and in that context, the apostle Paul is letting us know the attitude that's gonna give you victory on the way. And he says this. See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time because the days are evil.

Therefore, do not be unwise, but understand that the will of the Lord is. And do not be drunk with wine in which is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit. He goes on about praising and singing hymns and praise to the Lord.

Not just the alcohol that I mentioned there, but what I get the attitude is just a basically buzzed, dizzy life of carelessness. Circumspective means like you're drawing a circle. So you're walking and you're looking around you is the attitude the apostle Paul is giving us.

So when I'm in this place, I'm kind of looking and I'm paying attention along the way circumspectly. And I'm not just like a fool that's, oh, oh, you know, all right. And you're just getting distracted by everything.

And those are the things that I think is what Paul is giving to us. And so just having that attitude is very scriptural. This is the attitude of a victorious soldier.

So I'm gonna hit particularly because I think it's one of the, I think it's always been a temptation, but particularly with us, with all the availability of our media, I'm gonna look at some of these visual sins in the way that God, excuse me, the way that Satan gets to us. Okay, why is visual defilement so bad? You know, actually as they dug up ancient ruins like in Pompeii and different things, visual things have been real bad for a long time, you know, thousands of years. But now Satan has come up with crafty different ways to get that to us and quiet.

And usually at least from 50 years ago, if you wanted some of the real bad stuff, you had to go out somewhat in public to get a hold of it. Now that's kind of changing and it's becoming much more easy. But let's look at what Jesus said and why some of these things are, how they stick to us, how they weigh us down in such a terrible way, how they tear down churches, take down institutions.

Visual defilement. Luke says in Luke's 11.33, the lamp of the body is the eye. Therefore when your eye is good, your whole body also is full of light.

But when your eye is bad, your body also is full of darkness. Therefore take heed that the light which is, the light which is in you is not darkness. If then your whole body is full of light, having no part dark, the whole body will be full of light as when the bright shining of a lamp gives you light.

So what you look on all the time does, Jesus is telling us, has an effect on your entire body. It's just a fact that he's giving to us and he's letting us know. And Jesus took these visual sins very seriously.

I'm gonna read to you the one from the Sermon on the Mount about lust and that type of a thing. He's very serious. He's talking about, he goes to the heart in excavation.

He talks about amputation, taking it so seriously. And he talks about forming, formation of a proper fear of God. But let's look at this passage.

Sermon on the Mount stuff, Jesus teaching, taking it very seriously, this weight that typically gets us down. Matthew 5, 27. You have heard that it has been, you've heard that it was said in those of old, you shall not commit adultery, right? That's important, should not commit adultery.

But I say to you that whosoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. And I think it works the other way for you young ladies too. If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you.

For it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish than your whole body be cast into hell. And so this idea, he takes it very seriously. Now I think he is making a metaphor.

Because if you pluck out one eye, you can still sin with the other eye. But he's saying that you need to take, here's the point that I get out of this. You need to be able to take physical, drastic measures to deal with this sin.

In other words, if your iPhone offends thee, pluck it out. So you need to be able to say, quit saying, oh, I'm strong, I'm spiritual. And if you're failing, you're failing.

And you need to do something with it. When I talk to students sometimes, some of them will say, they look at the people who make straight A's and they go, wow, I wish I could make straight A's. And I was with a student once and I was talking with them.

And there was another straight A student who was going through all his flash cards and everything just while he was sitting there the whole time. And I said, why are those students like that so stupid that they have to study all the time? And I was being sarcastic, I was being facetious. The point is, that's the ones that make the A's.

And it's taking that seriousness. So we look at, oh, this guy had to have a flip phone. Well, he must have some problems.

No, he's taking it very seriously. Or this lady is in an accountability group. Or this person is doing something.

They're taking their life seriously. And not just flapping around. It's those are the people that are gonna make the difference.

Now, I will say this as a disclaimer. I think that there are mistakes when fighting sin. You can have a hyper asceticism, a hyper legalism, if you would, that is dangerous.

I have seen in this, well, I have seen two people that I know suffer castration over misinterpretation of Matthew five. And let me just give you, tell you something, it doesn't work, because if you take male hormones after that, it doesn't even fix the problem, all right? But, true, I've seen people get so messed up that they're literally hurting themselves and things. This happens with girls a lot.

You come under a lot of condemnation and you're hurting yourself and hitting yourself. It's wrong, it's devilish, it's not the way. Another way I see mistakes is what I call a hyper-pietism.

This one, oh, this one gets us all the time. This one is, I'm spiritual, I know I am, I don't need all that stuff. It's the one who doesn't need to do the extra study or the extra measures.

And I'm not gonna think of myself as that person who needs those kind of things, so I'm hyper-spiritual. I came through with this last year, that's not me anymore. And we can get ourselves sometimes in trouble.

And, of course, the other big mistake is just lawlessness, is that the satanic lie of, well, God doesn't even see my outside. This didn't matter, he didn't see me that way, and you just go on living in this kind of lie. Another lie, another abuse of grace.

As Bonhoeffer called it, cheap grace. So, let's just go ahead and dive right in there. Are sexual sins any worse than other sins? I mean, there's gluttony was talked about, covetousness was talked about, all these different things were talked about.

Is this really any worse? But here's the thing that I will say out of both pastoral and parent and personal particular, sexual sins will mess you up. They will scar your life. And I'm sorry, the answer is yes, they are worse.

It's funny, in Corinthians, or Thessalonians, 1 Thessalonians, excuse me, 4.3, Paul put, for this is the will of God, your sanctification, this is the will of God. What's the will of God, Lord? This is the will of God, your sanctification, that you should abstain from sexual immorality, that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in passions of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God. 1 Corinthians 8 puts it this way, flee sexual immorality.

Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? A lot of commentators argue on this. There's an ancient one, Chrysostom, who tries to make an analogy of what's Paul saying there? And he's saying it's like this is the sins that actually make you feel like you just wanna go take a bath.

It's just filthiness of your entire body. And understand, we've read different things that you will not inherit the kingdom of God, covetousness and gluttonous or whatever. But you know, gluttony's a sin, don't get me wrong, and we need to not just forget about it.

But I've never once, in a back room of counseling or something, heard somebody come up to me and said, Brother Dean, when I was nine, my parents took me to Shady Maple, and I'm still scarred over it. You know, I haven't. It's wrong.

Falling into gluttony can be a problem. I'm not making light of that, but I wanna put it in perspective. But these sins mess up people for life.

It takes down churches. It takes down institutions. So we just need to learn that as this one comes on us strong, we're gonna defeat it.

And we're gonna defeat it with the power of the Holy Spirit, with the body of Christ, with the people of God. Why does it stick so much to us? What is it? You know, I think sexual sins corrupt the gifts that God gave us. There's certain emotions and certain dear things to us that these sins mimic.

Like, for instance, in Proverbs 5.18, it says, Rejoice in the wife of your youth, be intoxicated always in her love, but do not get drunk on the embrace of a forbidden woman. See the line there that he draws. There's these emotions in both single and married life, the love, the passion, a love of God even, and all those things are deep, deep emotions.

I'm gonna show you just a little biology lesson here to show you a little bit of what I mean. Okay, this is something that's built into the human. We have this thing in our brain called the limbic system.

This is the place in your brain where all the emotions play. As a matter of fact, when all the signals come in, they come through the spinal cord, they hit the limbic system, and then they make it to the frontal cortex and all those types of things. But your emotions play in this area, this deep place in your mind, and it's more than, you can't even express this.

For instance, somebody asks you, Dean, could you explain how much you love your wife? You can hardly even say it, you know. Because it's before language. It's deep, you know what I mean? These types of

things play on us, and we've gotta be careful because Satan uses this to get to us.

Now, God gave us some chemicals, the way that works out. Dopamine, endorphin, oxytocin, and serotonin are chemicals that are all messing in hormones that are messing in and working with all these beautiful things that God gave us, and they all do something a little different. Dopamine is the reward chemical, completing a task, doing self-care things, eating food, checking a WhatsApp message.

They put a little dopamine hit for that, and it feels good. Scrolling, scrolling can live us in this, or we can live in the serotonin, meditating and running or accomplishment. Somebody liked my post, bing, a little serotonin hit.

Oxytocin, this is released when you have babies, and it makes this love hormone, this care and concern, holding hands, hugging, giving a compliment, oxytocin, and then endorphin. Endorphin is the natural painkiller. When I give morphine in anesthesia, if you don't have a pain, like unless say we're replacing your hip or something, when I'm giving a morphine to those people, it just deals with the pain.

But if I give morphine to someone who's not undergoing those kind of surgeries, that morphine just saturates them and gives them all this intoxication, they become addicted to it. Your body makes this stuff, and different things release that as a response to pain. Some people get in the habit of actually causing trouble in churches or in your home or in rebellion or getting mad or hitting yourself, and that releases these types of things in a very satanic way.

Visionaries, we have to watch out for just the drive for something, and these kind of hormones that Satan can use to confuse us. So, what are ways that Satan uses these things as drugs to us? So you're going about your life, things aren't working out, this guy that you thought it was gonna work out didn't work out. This job that you were wanting didn't work out, and you're starting to feel depressed and feeling like my life is going nowhere, and you go back to your drug of choice, and Satan wants to be there to offer it to you.

Pornography is probably one of the worst. You have actually pictures they have of brains on pornography and on heroin, and seeing the same places of the brain light up. I should've brought a picture of that.

Outbursts of wrath are one. Eating, it's one I typically go to. When I get depressed, I start eating, and I have to realize, okay, Dean, I'm using this as a drug, it's wrong.

Shopping, you know, Amazon is a little too easy these days. Risky behavior, driving and alcohol does this. Your cell phone's in a myriad of ways.

Movies, you get lost in the movies of all the adventure and all the romance and all the things, and Satan is just playing through this, through these hormones, complaining, gossip. This passage here just makes me tremble in this modern age. It's about the widows that Paul is talking about, but I take it to me.

But she who lives in pleasure is dead while she lives. I wonder, what was Paul even thinking of these Corinthian, or was that Timothy, those ladies? How much pleasure were they living in? Compared to my life, it's a scary thought. But so here's the thing.

Your brain, and this is the part you gotta get. Your brain has trouble telling the difference between what is real and what is imagined, so it produces these hormones. So you're watching the movies and the pornography, and this is hitting, and oh, I feel so loved, I feel so accepted, I've got endorphins, or whatever this thing may be, and Satan uses this as this cycle of sin that goes through and entraps you in a snare.

And it uses this very God-given, beautiful hormones that God has given to us, and it's a trap. Negativity. There's a recent research, and I checked it out, it's not just a hoopla, it's a literal research that's done.

It's a Stanford University that they found that being critical actually shrinks your hippocampus. Constant complaining in critical nature destroys your brain, and it's the same place that gets messed up for Alzheimer's disease. Complaining.

Gratitude, on the other hand, brings all this serotonin and the good things. And for us, we know the praise of God and his redemption. And when you're getting into these temptations, when you're getting into the cycle that's gonna bring you to sin, praising God can lift you out of that.

The joy of praising and that type of a thing. All right, so let's look at one of these, how God works with our conscience. Conscience is a big tool that God has given to us.

There's a story of Avensia Airlines that crashed in 1984. It was not an English speaker, probably Hispanic speakers that were there. And they were, in 1984, they were coming into one of these big valleys.

And as they were coming, it was foggy, they couldn't see where they were going, and they were looking at their instruments. And after this crash, true story, I looked it up, after the crash, they had a, they looked at the black box, and they looked at what was being said by the pilot right before he crashed. And what they found is that the automatic warning system of the airplane kept saying, pull up, pull up, pull up.

And they have on record the pilot saying, he said, shut up, gringo. And turned off the automatic warning signal and crashed into the mountain and died. And so did, I don't know, maybe all of them or several of them in the plane.

This is what we can do to our conscience. Pull up, stop, do something different. And those things, and if we can, if we take that and mess with that, it's gonna mess you up.

So what is the conscience? You see, it's not the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit and the word of God instructs the conscience but conscience is given to something both in the world and it's something that's built into the natural person. If you would, let's consider the conscience, it's not, but let's consider it like another little piece of the brain that needs to be exercised properly and to be instructed by the word of God and by the Holy Spirit.

And so this is what I mean by this. Your conscience needs to be trained by the Holy Spirit and the word of God. This is important.

Acting according to conscience may sometimes be sin. People in religious superstitions, walking in different things, actually they fill a conscience to do these things but that actually can be sin. If the conscience is misinformed, then we seek the reasons for this misinformation.

We need to ask, is it misinformed because the person has been neglecting the study of the word of God? And I'll back this up with some scripture. Look at this passage. Hebrew five says, for though by this time, you ought to be teachers.

You need someone to teach you against the first, again, the first principles of the oracles of God. And you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe.

But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is those who by reason of us have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. You need to exercise this part of who you are with the word of God, with the word of God. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 2.11, who knows what is in man but the spirit of the man? In Romans, when he's speaking of the pagan Gentile culture, in Romans 2.14, he brings in a very clear understanding of the conscience here.

He said, for when Gentiles who do not have the law by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves who show the work of the law written in their hearts, watch, their conscience, also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them. This is something natural. This is something non-saved people have, it's natural.

Paul clarifies also it's not actually the Holy Spirit but the Holy Spirit needs to instruct your conscience, the word of God. You may be excusing yourself for your sin. You may be excusing yourself for the movies you're watching or the things you're doing or whatever, the covetousness or whatever.

The Holy Spirit instructs your conscience in a proper way. Paul says this. He says, I care very little, 1 Corinthians 4.3, I care very little if I am judged by you or by any human court.

Indeed, I do not even judge myself. My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent. It is the Lord who judges me.

Therefore, judge nothing before the appointed time. Wait until the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of the heart.

At that time, each will receive their praise from God. That's the way that we should be able to have. But notice he makes the distinguishing point.

Did you catch it? His conscience is clear and he talks a lot about the conscience of others and all this type of thing, but that even of itself is not what he will be judged by. He's judged by the Lord, but his conscience is directed by the Lord. So, the conscience, how and which ways can the conscience be messed up? This is a picture of an iron.

Do you see that? It's like a blacksmith. And the idea is you take this hot iron the scriptures are giving and if you take a nerve and you sear it, well, you no longer feel that. And we do this in medicine all the time.

You know, you have a pain or something, and you sear that, you no longer feel the pain. Through the Holy Spirit and through the conscience, there's things that God is using to wake us up. Pull up, pull up, you're about to hit a cliff.

And he gives us things, but if we sear that, it can really destroy us. But here's the scary thing. Both legalism and lawlessness can sear your conscience.

Both. Legalism can sear it. And licentiousness, lawlessness can sear it.

You've gotta have the word of God to instruct you what it is that you're walking. Let me give you an example of each, one of each. Of lawlessness.

In Romans 1, 21. For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God, nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man

and birds and animals and reptiles.

He goes on, he says, to the pure, and this is in, excuse me, not goes on, but this is now in Titus 1, 15. To the pure, all things are pure. But to those who are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure, but even their mind and conscience are defiled.

When you just give it into yourself to licentiousness, you give into yourself to feeding on all those things, searing of your conscience, searing. Now, Bible schools are not meant to give you a guilt trip, they're not. But they are meant for us, just like if we were meeting with a military campaign, and we're meeting together to learn some tactics for war and to go forth, it's for us to do inventory.

It's for us to take an honest look at ourselves and say, are there places that I'm searing that conscience? But it also works the other way, in legalism. This can be scary, both a theological legalism and a physical, religious legalism. First Timothy 4, one, it says, now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies and hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry and commanding to abstain from meats which God has created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth.

Have you ever tried to minister to someone who's come out of a cult? It's really hard. And this is what a factious spirit in the body of Christ, it sears consciences, it messes people up. Because if you go around your whole life and say that church is stupid and that church is stupid and they're doing it wrong and they're doing it wrong and we're the ones right, aren't we? And then when you start having problems, and we do, well then that person's left thinking, well this is wrong and so is everything else.

And I've seen young people go from amazingly following Christ to amazingly falling in just moments. And I wonder if some of it comes from this sort of factious spirit. We have to be careful, it sears our conscience.

We also have to be careful, I've always been in renewal churches here at Charity and different charity type churches that are usually working with renewal of a very conservative world. And we've gotta be careful. When people come from a very conservative background into one of our backgrounds, there's some things that they're doing still in their conscience.

And we gotta just be careful not to just belittle everything. Yes, it needs instructed in the word of God, it does. But be careful, because we don't want to just say, oh, none of that, this is so dumb and all that, and next thing you know what, they're defiling their conscience.

They haven't worked through it yet in the Holy Spirit. You know what I mean? And that's what we have to be careful with. But with the garbage in, garbage out, if we continue to walk in that kind of a thinking, you're just gonna mess up your conscience.

I gave you this slide again. Again, I'm not taking away your cell phones or all those types of a thing, but honestly, if you imagine the way that Paul is talking about walking circumspectly, redeeming the time, being careful, you're not running the race, and then you think of it, if this is a reality, if it's a reality today, it's gotta change. It's gotta change.

Flip them. Amen? Flip them. Let that be the word of God or spiritual messages or worship or praising God and prayer and all those things on the right, and on the left, your media consumption.

That, I guarantee, would change everything. Because here's what happens. When the time arrives for your conscience to act, it will only fire on signals in keeping with the values you predominantly provided it with, and herein lies the conflict.

You can say that you believe whatever you want, but your conscience has been feeding on what you read, what you listen to, what you watch, the influences of the company you keep, and what you think about mostly. It will show you exactly what is within yourself by responding based on those accumulated values. Paul says, but we have renounced the hidden things of shame.

We have renounced the hidden things of shame. Are you feeling that? Are you here today, and anytime somebody talks about holiness or something that you feel this shame, through Paul, Paul says through the word of God, you can renounce those hidden things of shame. Not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully.

That's like, as Bonhoeffer calls it, cheap grace. Just kind of using all this stuff sloppily. But by a manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

Brother, how am I walking? That us, that we, that walking in, and as a people together, it's powerful. Now, I'm gonna really get real personal, okay? The spiral, the spiritual death cycle of a seared conscience. I think about this sort of, when you get into this area where you've actually got like a drug, you're in a habit that when you're depressed, or when things are going bad, you go to that drug.

Whether it's movies or pornography, shopping, eating, whatever it is, you go to that to soothe that pain. It hurts, and you get crazy hurt sometimes. And you go to that in those moments.

I wanna show you how I think the Holy Spirit is working in your life, and what happens, and why you're in this circle that keeps, and it's killing you. All right, here's your life. Here's your spirit.

Here's you before God. And you sin. Now, when sin happens, it's a bad thing.

But here you are, you're there, and you have a sin, but at this moment, something happens, and you have a painful conviction of your sin. You're there, and you know it's wrong to look at pornography, but you're hurting so bad, and you're feeling so depressed, and so you sin. And you've got this painful conviction over your sin.

Broken, you pray passionately to the Lord for forgiveness. Hallelujah, amen for that. Grace comes with forgiveness, but here's what I have found, and I guarantee this is happening to you.

It comes with very clear instructions. Here's what I have found. But where sin abounds, grace abounds much more.

But grace does not just give you your forgiveness, it actually gives you teaching on how to make sure this never, ever happens again. So it brings in a very specific instruction, and here's this passage. Make sure you understand this.

Anybody have listened to Paris Reid had sermon on 10 shekels and a shirt? How many of you listened to that? All right, excellent. He has another one on this passage of why everyone should know that this is what grace does. He says, or Paul says here in Titus 2, 11, and these are the very specific instruction that the moment it's happening, look how I've pinpointed it down to one moment.

Right there, when sin abounds, grace much more abounds. For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, hallelujah, that he might redeem us from every lawless deed, every lawless deed, and purify for himself his own special people, zealous for good works. But here's what I have found.

At that moment, right there at that moment, the Holy Spirit is giving you the exact instructions, and I mean a blueprint, okay? You fell again. You know exactly what you're supposed to do. You're supposed to call brother this, or you're supposed to get rid of this phone.

You kept doing it over and over again, or you know that these movies are trapping you in your mind or something, and I don't know what it is. This is the Holy Spirit speaking to you, but I think I know that you know what I'm talking about, and that at those moments, you're told exactly what will prevent this from ever happening again. It goes with grace.

It's part of the package. He's teaching you. He's instructing you.

He's not just forgiving you. He's teaching you and showing you this never has to happen again. You can be free.

At this very moment, the Holy Spirit specifically tells you what to do, but the next day, you feel joy of forgiveness and repentance. Your sin is gone, and it is, and you remember the instructions that the Holy Spirit gave you, but you feel that you have learned your lesson. I'm stronger now.

Therefore, you don't follow through with the instructions that the Holy Spirit gives you. You know exactly what he told you to do, but I'm stronger now. I don't know.

Boy, I feel so spiritually strong now. I'm not even tempted anymore. I don't even get tempted anymore.

I'm so strong, and this is the trap. This is the cycle. You enter a deadly phase of false confidence at this part of the circle of time, a deadly phase.

You go around saying, yeah, I used to have a problem. I'm so free. I don't even get tempted anymore.

This is great. I broke through, and it's amazing, and this can be very deadly. It can be true or it can be very deadly, a part of the cycle of sin.

1 Corinthians 10, 12 says, therefore, let him who thinks he stand take heed. Be careful lest you fall. You feel strong.

You're sure you have learned your lesson. You had a spiritual breakthrough, and you don't need to do the humiliating things you were thinking just a week ago, so you go on. But now a little more time lapse, and now you feel depressed again.

Things are discouraging again. Things are going bad again, right? It feels yucky again, and you start to get that temptation. Oh, I thought that was gone.

I thought I wasn't tempted anymore, and now I'm suddenly getting the temptation again, and so the cycle of sin increases. Now, I think of the passage in Genesis 4, 7. Sin lies at the door, God was telling Cain,

and its desire is for you, but you should rule over it. We have the power to live over this, especially with the Holy Spirit, but it's like it's at the door.

It's trying to get you. James tells us, but each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin, and sin, when it is full grown, brings forth death.

So, at that time, I have found the Holy Spirit reminds you. You didn't obey my instruction. You're in temptation now.

Do you remember what I told you three weeks ago? Do you remember that? You were supposed to go talk to Brother John. You were supposed to go get on some accountability. You were supposed to talk to your parents, or your friend, or your accountability group.

You were supposed to do something very drastic, and I said exactly what you were supposed to do, and you didn't do it, so hurry and go do it, and the Holy Spirit reminds you, but you feel embarrassed and humiliated, and you convince yourself, no, I'm a spiritual giant. I can do this, I can get past it. There's no temptation that God has given me.

I can be strong, and then you're here in the moment of crisis. You feel overcome by temptation. The spiritual attack is strong, but the Holy Spirit gives you this promise.

No temptation has overtaken you, except such as common to man, but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able. This is a promise, but with the temptation, watch now, will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it. He doesn't make promise that you'll be strong.

He doesn't promise that you will just be able to have that phone flipping around, and you won't be tempted. He gives you a way of escape, escape. Daniel ran out of his temptation when it was given to him.

God gives us a way, so if you take your phone, have you ever taken your phone, and thrown it across the room, because you notice you're in this moment? I have. This is the kind of stuff. He's given us escape.

Run from it, and if you don't, you are on thin ice. You tell yourself that you do not need these legalistic means. You're a spiritual person, and you can be strong, not to escape, but you think you should be strong, and then you sin.

This cycle goes over, and over, and over again. You have to use these things. We need to allow the Holy Spirit to convict us, but you need to get serious with sin.

It's not legalistic, says talk to someone. We need the body of Christ, we need believers, and I'm telling you, churches, denominations, institutions have fallen because of this. This whole Zachariah, what's his, Ravi.

I mean, how could a man like that? God has given us the Holy Spirit. God has given us brothers, and when we hide this, we deceive ourselves, and we keep following in these cycles of sin. Remember, God can't change the person you're pretending to be.

I remember a sermon by Zach Poonen. I'll never forget it. He says, there's no blood for mistakes.

What he means by that is we tend to just explain these away, oh, oops, oh, it's my habit, oh, I was angry, or whatever, it's my heritage, or it's my nature, it's my dad, or whatever, but there is blood for sin, and when God convicts, if we sin, we have an advocate with the Father, the Lord Jesus Christ, and he is the propitiation for our sin. But if we're playing games in this circle, in this cycle, and you're playing games, you can't have the healing. But if you bring it before the Lord, if you're honest, and you're going through the things, he will heal, and he can heal everything, everything.

And let's look at that, everything. So finally, what is the way to have the total freedom of this way? One of my absolute favorite passages is in Hebrew, and we'll close with this thought. A few more slides, and that's it, just on these verses.

It's hard, and all these things in life, it's very hard, but God wants a pure people that's victorious, that's walking with him, he doesn't want you to fall into this with legalism, and he doesn't want you to get this through lawlessness. He wants it to be by the indwelling of him inside of you, and nothing else, and nothing else. And this passage shows us the way to take that conscience that you're feeling, and if God is convicting you today, if God is convicting you and putting his finger on something directly today, and by all means, if you've never come to God and accepted this atoning sacrifice that I'm about to read to you, listen carefully today, and if you have, this place is the place where we can have the healing.

Let's look at this amazing passage in Hebrew's Tandem, and then I'm gonna be done. Hebrew's chapter 10, except for I'm gonna give you the victory in Revelation, I just remembered. In Hebrew's chapter 10, this is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord.

I will put my laws into their heart, and in their mind will I write them. Then he adds, their sins and their lawless deeds, I will remember no more. Now where there is remission of these, there is no longer an offering for sin.

We're just saying arise, my soul, arise today. That's your confidence we all sung out. Your confidence is here.

Watch what he says now, he goes on. Therefore, because of this sacrifice, because of what's happening in the heavenlies there, therefore, brethren and sisters, therefore, having boldness to enter the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which is consecrated for us through the veil, that is his flesh, and having a high priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water, let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, because he is faithful who promised. You see, that's the way that we can really have a clear conscience, is being honest with this, taking that sin, taking it before the throne room of God, and laying it down for God, and then he will take that, and he will let us draw near with a true heart and full assurance of faith, and he will sprinkle your evil conscience and wash you.

That's a free and open heaven, and that's the way we have victory in our life. That's the way that we're gonna be spiritual warriors, is this, but when that gets muddy, there's no victory. You gotta be serious with this.

Two more verses, I think, and I think this is it, but just a praise that I see in heaven. Satan wants to right now try to tell you, you've fallen that cycle too much. What Brother Dean was talking about, you know you can't do that.

You're a louse, there's nothing you can do, and I love all these promises that are put on the place here. Those are the lies of the devil. It's through this testimony, it's through this faith in Jesus Christ that he wants to have you have this victory and a praise of him.

It says in Revelation 12, when it speaks of the attacks of the antichrists, it says, and they overcame him by the blood of the lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death. And then finally, in Revelation 12, when we talk about the whole defeat of the antichrist, so that great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world. He was cast into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him, then I heard a loud voice in heaven saying, now salvation and strength and the kingdom of our God and the power of his Christ has come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down.

By the testimony that you can have in Jesus Christ. So, that's what was in that window, when Balaam was trying to curse the people of God, he has not observed iniquity in Jacob, nor has he seen wickedness in Israel. Don't leave this Bible school without that kind of an open heaven, without having all those cycle of sins destroyed, doing serious business with God, getting with brothers, accountability groups, or whatever it takes, getting right with God and the Holy Spirit, getting a hold of it.

Be serious today, and always walk with a clear heaven like that. Let's pray. Dear Heavenly Father, I thank you, Lord, for your grace, for the blood of Jesus Christ, for the way you write these things on our heart.

I pray, God, that every one of us would just be very honest and open with you. You said that you would take out our heart of stone and put in a heart of flesh, you would write your ways upon our heart, and that you would cause us to walk in your ways. So, Lord, I pray for that for every one of us, that we would follow you and praise you, and that you would lift up your people to glorify you and you alone, and that we would have that kind of clear heaven before we leave this day.

I thank you, Lord, and I praise you for your word and your blood. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

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