

# Postgraduate Courses

by Jim Cymbala

---

*Jim Cymbala discusses the deeper spiritual lessons God teaches mature believers, emphasizing the importance of humility, suffering, and reliance on God's strength.*

**Duration:** 34:06

**Scripture:** 1 Samuel 16:1-13, Isaiah 45:9, Matthew 26:69-75, Acts 2:14-41, Romans 8:37, 2 Corinthians 12:9

**Topics:** "Christian Life"

---

## Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the history of denominations and how they often start with a humble and desperate cry to God. However, as they become established, they tend to prioritize their own rules and regulations over the teachings of the Bible. The preacher emphasizes that God tends to use those who have been wounded and broken, as they can better sympathize with others and reach out to them. He also highlights the importance of relying on the Spirit of Christ during times of difficulty and challenges. The sermon concludes by reminding listeners that whoever God uses, He first wounds, and this is a lesson that Christians should be aware of in their journey of faith.

---

## Transcript

I never went to postgraduate work in college. I just graduated from the University of Rhode Island with a degree. I never went to postgraduate work.

But when you go to postgraduate work, you learn things that they don't teach you in junior high school or high school or even college. You go deeper. Whatever your field of study is, you're going into the real depth of the matter.

And I would like to speak to you briefly about postgraduate courses that God offers. Postgraduate courses that God offers not to the novice. And if you're a new believer here, you follow, you can learn.

But these are things that when you walk with the Lord for a while, you learn. And some of us maybe in this room don't even know this postgraduate course, a couple of these courses I want to tell you about. But we all need to know them.

And we have a lot of pastors here, and I dedicate this message to you based on my own life, based on the Bible first, obviously, but based on experiences that I've had and mistakes I've made. The passage that we're going to read from is unlike any other passage in the Bible, certainly unlike anything in the New

Testament, because it goes into things that we almost feel uncomfortable with because the American Gospel has become full of a false triumphalism. Christ gives us the ability to be more than conquerors, but it's not the kind of conquerors that the Old Testament had or that the American concept of conquering has given to society.

So this portion of Scripture to a lot of people let's say in the false prosperity and faith movement causes little concern. And I heard one of the leading faith teachers many years ago actually say that he doesn't know what Paul was talking about here, but if Paul didn't have faith, that was his problem, not this man's problem, which of course is nonsense. This is all part of the package of the new covenant blessing God has for us with the goal of eternal life and the goal here of being used for Christ, by Christ, to spread the good news of Jesus.

We don't possess land. Old Testament Jewish people possess land. The Philistines tried to possess land.

We don't claim territory. That's unheard of in the New Testament. We win souls.

Muslims claim territory right now. That's what they want to do is control territory. Christians don't control territory.

We win souls. And if we win enough souls, nations will be changed. All in favor say aye.

So now this postgraduate course and this passage of Scripture, unlike any other, is not going to make us squirm. It is what it is. It's in the book.

It's inspired. And now what are the three postgraduate lessons that we can learn? Look at it. It's found in 2 Corinthians 12, verse 1. Let's take it off for one second.

I need a little bit more context. Paul is writing to the church at Corinth. Probably a third letter.

The first letter was lost. And we have 1 Corinthians, which is probably a second letter. And then we have the third letter, which we call 2 Corinthians.

And some false teachers have come in. Some false apostles who claim to be super triumphant, super spiritual apostles. And they've put down Paul behind his back to the church in Corinth.

And this is very painful to Paul because he spent 18 months of his life in Corinth, and he gave birth to that church through the gospel. He was their spiritual father. So in this very unusual passage of a couple chapters, Paul is actually defending himself, but then he gets embarrassed that he's defending himself and he's intimating, I shouldn't be defending myself to you.

I shouldn't be telling you how much I love you and that I'm the real deal and gave you the real gospel. And these other characters, they're con artists. They've given you a Jesus, but not the Jesus in the Bible, not the one I gave you.

And they've given you a gospel, but it's not the gospel I gave you. And you've received a spirit, but it's not the Holy Spirit. So this is a very severe problem and one that we should ponder at times.

Is the gospel we're getting from certain people, including the speaker tonight, is this the gospel that's in the New Testament or is this some new hybrid gospel? So now he's defending himself and he jumps to the point of, I'm not going to compare myself with them, but if I would compare myself, I would go on to

revelations and encounters that I've had with the Lord. But to be modest, he doesn't say it's him. He says, I knew a man in Christ.

But then he reveals that that man he's talking about is him. Very unusual portion of Scripture, unlike anything found in any of the Pauline writings. So let's look at it.

I must go on boasting. Although there's nothing to be gained, I will go on to visions and revelations from the Lord. I know a man in Christ, he won't give the name, who 14 years ago was caught up to the third heaven.

And whether it was in the body or out of the body, I do not know, but God knows. And I know that this man, whether in the body or apart from the body, I do not know, but God knows, was caught up to paradise. He heard inexpressible things, things that man is not permitted to tell another person.

I will boast about a man like that, but I will not boast about myself except about my weaknesses. Even if I should choose to boast, I would not be a fool because I would be speaking the truth. But I refrain so no one will think more of me than is warranted by what I do or I say.

And now we get into some heavy water. To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me, but he said to me, my grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.

Therefore I will boast, Paul says, all the more gladly about my weaknesses so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why for Christ's sake I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties, for when I am weak then I am strong. So, postgraduate course number one.

This you do not learn when you first become a Christian, but as you walk with the Lord, and especially if you go into the ministry you learn this, that there is a natural tendency in all of us no matter how much God blesses us, that we will somehow, someday, drift away from the Lord, especially the tendency to pride in the very blessings that God has given us. Lesson number one for all of us is there's a natural tendency in every single one of us to automatically, if left to ourselves, drift away from the Lord. And to possibly be lifted up in pride because of the very blessing that God has given us.

So the pastor who had 30 people in his church and he grows to 500 and now he's tempted to be proud because he doesn't have 30 people anymore, he has 500 and he's looked at as someone who's successful in the ministry. And that very blessing of reaching those people can trap him. Or the person who didn't have two nickels to rub together and was trusting God for everything and then they get married and God blesses them and now they got a raise on their job and a baby comes.

That very blessing becomes a possible trap to fall away from dependence on the Lord and lose tenderness of spirit. The apostle Paul says that I knew a man and was him that 14 years ago, this didn't happen to him every week, 14 years ago he had an experience. He was lifted up into the third heaven, whatever that is.

He calls it paradise. And whatever he saw he won't go into but he heard things that it was communicated to him, you're not allowed to speak about these things that you heard. Lifted up into the third heaven with that kind of experience.

The next thing he says but to keep me from being conceited God had a deal with me. Wouldn't the apostle Paul not have a problem with pride? I mean when you're a man like the apostle Paul, the greatest Christian, no. For all of us we have a tendency to stray.

You don't know that when you first become a Christian everything is peaches and cream. But it's not like that when you walk with the Lord. When you walk with the Lord you find in yourself natural tendencies to laziness in the things of God.

To not depending on God like you used to. To not spending time with God like you used to. To not diligently studying the Word like you used to.

The more sermons you preach as a pastor the greater the temptation is that you can ride on past successes or past sermons. It's in there no matter whether you like it or not. It's just in there.

It's in our flesh. It's in our natural self. And also in our natural self is this terrible tendency to be lifted up with pride and think we're somebody we're not.

And instead of copying Jesus and walking in humility we can all easily strut around and think we're somebody. When apart from God we're nothing. We hear Jesus say without me you can do nothing and we say amen to it and then we live as if we can do something without Jesus Christ.

That's in all of us and that's in a postgraduate course that you don't take when you first are learning the ABCs of the Christian faith. So Paul said I got this blessing but the blessing came with the danger because with the revelation and with the third heaven and with what I saw and heard the Lord said no this thing could be for your ruin which takes us to postgraduate lesson number two whoever God uses he first wounds. No one tells you that when you first become a Christian.

It's all just claim the promises and walk with the Lord and everything is going to be fine. But as you study your Bible, as you walk with the Lord as you go through life experience you find out that whoever God is going to use, whoever comes to him and says here I am Lord here I am your servant is listening for God to use us because of the natural tendencies in all of us he wounds us for Paul it was a messenger of Satan and he uses the word to torment me. How in the world could God be part of any situation where someone connected to Satan is tormenting you but I told you it's a postgraduate course this is not for the new believer this is for us who really want to go deeper with God and be used.

Think about it to be used by God and to minister to people who are hurting God has to hurt you. Oh yes he does anybody tells you different they don't know what they're talking about take Joseph. Joseph is one of the great names in the Old Testament.

Joseph was going to be the first shall we say deliverer before Moses was the deliverer because it was through Joseph being at the right hand of Pharaoh that Jacob and his children didn't die but they were fed food and then Joseph revealed himself to his brothers and got him set up living in the land of Goshen and everything was very preferential for the Hebrews because they were connected to Joseph. Joseph was the man. But how did Joseph get to that position? He had his own brothers hate him.

He had his own brothers jealous of him. How'd you like to live with 11 brothers and they all can't stand you? How'd you like to live with brothers who try to kill you one day? But one says stop just out of jealousy. What mental emotional turmoil did Joseph have to go through on that day when they saw him coming and said let's get rid of this daddy's boy this father's favorite and then to be spared death but then to be sold for

some filthy stinking money by your own brothers as a slave to some Midianite slave traders and end up in Egypt but it's still not over for Joseph because he ends up in Potiphar's house.

He's bought by Potiphar and he's serving there and now it looks better because he's so blessed by God he's so trusted by God by Potiphar that everything looks now is going to be better. No no no no there's another wound coming. Potiphar's wife lusts after him.

Tries to grab him one day. He flees. She grabs his garment, claims attempted rape.

Potiphar comes home and believes the wife and no matter what Joseph says he ends up in the slammer. Now all these visions and dreams he had how do you hold on to those when you're in prison on a false accusation? How do you do that? And you think back of your childhood memories and it's your brothers trying to kill you and then he interprets a dream and it looks like he'll get out because the dream got somebody reinstated next to Pharaoh but then the guy forgot him. His moment came and he was used by God in a great way but not until God wounded him.

Take Moses, hundreds of years later he starts out as you know saved as a baby and then he ends up being raised by Pharaoh's daughter and then he tries to step out on his own but his Hebrew compatriots now when he finds out he's a Jew they don't receive him and then to show himself as somebody important he ends up killing an Egyptian who was whipping one of them and then he finds out that it's found out and then he flees and he's 40 years in the backside of a desert. Wouldn't you give up after 40 years and say I had my shot but I lost it? I had my chance, I was raised in Pharaoh's palace and now I just lost it? No, no, no. Then God comes to him, speaks out of a burning bush, tells him to go to Pharaoh and say let my people go and to appear in front of the people of Israel the Hebrews and he does and the Hebrew people are not sure about him and he goes to Pharaoh and he says let my people go thus sayeth the Lord and he says what I'm not letting anybody go and if you got enough time to be talking this kind of trash guess what you're going to make bricks without straw and now it's worse for the people the very people who came to deliver it's worse for them now and they blame him and he wants to quit and give up.

Oh no. And then when he let him out they're grumbling and they talked about killing him at least a couple times now whoever God uses he wounds first lastly in the Old Testament how about David? Jesus is called the son of David how would you like to have the courage to fight a bear and a lion and then face Goliath and be victorious and be so mightily used for the sake of the people of Israel and King Saul instead of appreciating you becomes jealous of you is like a bipolar or some kind of king and he's listening to music then he's throwing spears at you I mean how do you sleep at night? And then you lose your wife and then you have to take your parents and leave them with somebody else because you don't even know what God will do for you and now you're separated from your best friend Jonathan and now you're running in the wilderness and hiding in caves and in the desert for what? What did you do to get you there? Nothing. He did nothing wrong.

Find out one thing he did wrong. He did nothing wrong. With Saul and in that case he was spotless.

But God was preparing him to be the greatest king of Israel but before God uses us he has to wound us and then he fell into sin with Bathsheba but God used even that wound so we would get Psalm 51 have mercy upon me O Lord according to the multitude of your tender mercies cleanse me of my iniquity and who was the preacher on the day of Pentecost pastors? Who was the preacher on that day? That was Peter. Peter as in Jesus of Nazareth. I don't know who he is and I'll curse on top of that denied him three times and went out into the night weeping bitterly but God takes the failure and makes that wound the

qualification to be able to minister and who knows how many attacks Paul got in the middle of the night when Satan showed him all the Christians that he had killed and now he was preaching in the name of Christ.

How do you get past murder? Murder of the very people that you're now a part of. He said to Jesus who are you when he appeared to him? He said I am Jesus whom you're persecuting. When you study church history you find out that all the great men and women that God has used pastors and congregation they've all been wounded one of the greatest devotional writers whose books have blessed pastors is the great F.B. Meyer who pastored in England and you read any biography of F.B. Meyer I once asked my friend Warren Wiersbe why is his wife never mentioned because his wife wasn't right.

He had to live a life of brokenness and patience and being insulted. Charles Spurgeon battled not only with gout but had fits of depression that would keep him out of the pulpit for weeks. General Booth the founder of the Salvation Army would get attacks of nerves and not be able to go to where he was supposed to preach and his wife who was sickly and died decades before him and who had all those children she would have to go and preach for the general because the general was just indisposed because his nerves gave way and one of the saddest stories is John Wesley the founder of Methodism the Methodist church I just read a little pamphlet someone put together John Wesley's wife and she was not right she would go to his enemies and gossip about her own husband and make false accusations against him.

She wasn't right. I don't know how else to say it except how they say it on Fulton Street she ain't right she's just not right. One day while he was speaking to some of his Methodist leaders she was in some kind of fit and frenzy and she ran in and attacked him physically and tore off his wig in front of all the leaders and then you read about how God used John Wesley not despite his problems because of his problems.

Paul said I got to the place where I'm not going to glory in visions and revelations here's what I'll glory in trouble, difficulty hardships, heartache problems because I've learned this from God when I'm weak in myself then I'm strong. His power is made perfect in weakness. I never knew that for the first 5-10 years of my ministry as a pastor I tried to be strong.

I thought if you have it all together then you can minister if you have your notes all together if everything's working out right in your family and with your children then you can get up and minister. Listen to me please everybody listen to me. It's when you are hanging by a thread that the Spirit of Christ will come upon you and help you to do things you've never done before.

Can we put our hands together and say Amen to that? Come on let's do it. Let's say Amen to it. So lesson number one goes with lesson number two doesn't it? We all have the tendency to get a little crazy and to fall away from the faith that we need and to get lifted up with pride.

The same sin that turned Lucifer into Satan is very very easily embraced by our own hearts. It's just the way it is. You read the history of denominations when they start and they don't have much money and they're just crying out to God and seeking God for God.

God so prospers them and in a minute they get fairly established and then they make their constitution and their rule book bigger than the Bible and they start having their banner and their name everywhere the whole thing goes down and then God has to look for another group of people that are broken and

shattered. It's the history of the Christian church. Just read it.

So number two lesson is that whoever God is going to use he's going to wound first. How are you going to sympathize with people unless you've been hurt yourself? How are you going to reach down to somebody who's broken unless you've been broken? You don't even know the feeling. Am I speaking the truth or not here? Say amen.

How in the world are you going to have compassion unless you see yourself? There but for the grace of God goes me. One of the most powerful men of God from 20-25 years ago once got up in our pulpit and shared how while he was writing great books and was being mightily used of God that things were so bad in the house that his wife and he had had drawn up divorce papers but God blocked it from happening. But the anguish of it the attacks whoever God uses he first wounds.

Last lesson. Given the first two we can bring our problems to God now and not be ashamed of them or think something's wrong. We can bring it to him and say since you let this happen you must have something special for me God.

Since I'm going through what I'm going through I expect the spirit of Christ to rest upon me. That's what Paul said. Paul said I'll glory in that because if I'm going through that then the spirit of Christ is going to be upon me.

Who wants an easy perfect life with no blessing from God? I want to be used. How about you? How many want to be a blessing to the world? To the world you live in? Well here's the way it works. Whoever he uses he wounds first.

And tonight you can take what you're going through and say God I'm not going to hide it, be embarrassed, not talk about it I'm not going to try to hide it from my friends. It is what it is what it is. This is what he's permitted for now but he's got a purpose in it.

Most of us think God only brings us out of problems. Most of us don't understand the lesson that God brings us through the problem and while you're going through it you're experiencing a blessing that you won't know any other way. I'm speaking for Rabbi Zacharias last Friday night ten days ago in Orlando and somehow I got remembering some of the darkest moments in my life.

A lot of years ago when my nerves started to go at the same time that my wife had had female surgery and hormonally she was off and she actually started to talk about suicide not suicide but not wanting to live anymore and my oldest girl is away from God and there are nights many nights I don't even know where she is as a pastor you have your oldest girl you love her with all your heart like I love my other two kids you don't know where she is and your wife doesn't want to live and if the phone rings you start to cry that's not easy.

But you know what I found I couldn't make notes I couldn't study the Bible like I used to because I would start to read it.

God is my witness I would read one passage and I'd start so convulsively to cry that I couldn't focus on the passage and I would go into the pulpit saying to myself oh no this is going to be so bad for the people instead of feeding them and helping them I'm going to just leave them high and dry but in my weakness God came when you don't listen listen when you don't even know the next sentence you're going to say he gives you the sentence he supplies he helps come on how many have found that true put your hands

together with me he helps so now close your eyes with me now I know that if you're going through problems we all know now you're going through something that's so difficult some attack of Satan some torment some adversary in the church or outside the church some financial crisis

some whatever that's the very thing that you bring to God and say God now we're cooking now you're going to do something great in my life I'm not embarrassed about this no I'm bringing it to you Lord because you said in your word your power is made perfect in weakness and you have permitted this to weaken me in my own strength so that you can make me strong with your strength blessed be the name of the Lord if you're here today and you're a pastor a pastor's wife and somehow this has resonated with you and you want to bring to God your difficulty not just say here am I but God I bring my difficulty and I'm saying now with my difficulty with my weakness give me a double portion of the grace I've known in the past come out of your seat pastor or pastor's wife or worker or Christian just

come up out of your seat and say I want to affirm that I want to consecrate myself to the Lord come on anybody in the building in the balcony downstairs pastor that was for me I'm going through it but I see it now in a different light God's going to use my trouble going to use my problem to keep me close to him and now a double sense of his blessing is going to be on my life instead of being discouraged I bring it freely to him instead of being like what in the world is going on no I bring it to him I say God I know you're in this oh I bless you Lord and I want everybody not just us up in the front because this is for all of us if you're not there yet you'll get there if you're not going through it now it might happen soon but God doesn't give us what we want all the time he gives us what

we need it's not about us it's about God and he knows what's best so be encouraged my friend if you're going through it it means something really good is about to happen in the balcony downstairs and in the front I want every man to just turn and face one other man and get a prayer partner join his hands and face him every woman find a woman face her Lord thank you for your word thank you for some postgraduate courses tonight we need you every day keep us close to you otherwise we will stray because in the flesh dwells no good thing by your grace keep us close to you Lord we're not afraid to face the fact that whoever you're going to use you wound them you break them you make them tender you soften our hearts through trials difficulties heartache it's not to hurt us it's to prepare us for

even Jesus learned obedience through the things he suffered and to bring salvation he had to be torn apart how could we expect something different we thank you now that we don't have to be ashamed of our problems we can glory in them we can rejoice in difficulties disappointments heartache people letting us down because you use all of it to bring a greater anointing of your Holy Spirit on our lives so that we can bless others make us sensitive to people today Lord some of us are very crusty and dry and we just look judgmentally at people instead of weeping over people help us to weep over people to see them the way you see feel what you feel Lord I thank you for every pastor every pastor's wife I pray they'll get a great rest and you'll prepare us for our first session at 9 o'clock

tomorrow morning Lord and get all of us home safely Lord and bless the transitions team that is in Coney Island use them tonight and protect them Lord especially after the sun goes down Lord keep them safe and watch over them we ask all these blessings in Jesus name and everyone said can we give God one last hand clap of praise

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/24/SID24635.mp3>  
Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/jim-cymbala/postgraduate-courses/>

# *Grow in Your Walk with Christ*

---

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

**[www.sermonindex.net](http://www.sermonindex.net)**