

Guide Posts and Warning Signs

by Paul Washer

Paul Washer's sermon highlights the necessity of prioritizing God over man and understanding our dependence on His grace and providence.

Duration: 1:09:25

Scripture: Proverbs 3:5-6, Isaiah 2:22, Jeremiah 2:5, Jeremiah 9:23, Matthew 6:33, Romans 12:2, Philippians 4:6-7

Topics: "Testimony"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares his personal life verses that have guided him throughout the years. He emphasizes the importance of staying focused on God and seeking a personal relationship with Him, rather than being distracted by worldly success or achievements. The speaker also highlights the need to bring our thought life under the Lordship of God and conform to His will. He emphasizes the importance of following the steps laid out in the Bible and not skipping over any of them in order to truly build a life of conformity to the image of Jesus Christ. The sermon concludes with a challenge to prioritize eternal matters and to let go of personal dreams and desires in order to align with God's will.

Transcript

Alright, well I didn't really expect to be here, but here I am. And it's very, very good to be here with you. And tonight what I'm going to do is take from some of my own, what I call my own, life verses.

There are certain verses throughout the years that I use as guideposts, or maybe the Lord uses them as guideposts in my life to keep me between the lines. And they're like warning signs, they're directing signs, they bring leadership. Many times in my life they have brought peace.

I was preaching a few weeks ago in a place, and while the worship was going on, and it was a beautiful worship and it seemed as though people were truly led by the Holy Spirit, my mind was utter chaos. From the moment the worship started, I could not concentrate upon the Lord, upon what I was doing, upon anything. And someone after the service, they asked me, they said, Brother Paul, I was watching you while everyone else was singing, your mouth was moving, but you weren't singing.

And I said, I was reciting many, many of the verses, and I haven't memorized that many, but the ones that I have memorized, I was reciting them. And they said, why? I said, my mind was in such confusion, but when I began to recite the Scripture, there was a clarity of mind again. And I believe that's biblical.

And the first verse that I want to go to tonight is Isaiah chapter 2, verse 22. I think in our day and age, this is one of the most important verses. Stop regarding man whose breath of life is in his nostrils, for why should he be esteemed? What an important verse that is today for a Christendom that has exalted men far too much.

And for even our own selves, when we begin to think too much about ourselves, stop regarding man whose breath of life is in his nostrils. Literally, some scholars say that this could be translated this way. Stop regarding man who is nothing more than a nose full of breath.

At any given time, the greatest men, even yea, the most spiritual men among us, are nothing more than a nose full of breath. And it is only that breath that they can count on. And when that breath flees from their nose, apart from the power and the grace of God, they have no hope for another.

And therefore, Yahweh, the Lord, asks, why should men be esteemed? Why should they be esteemed? The greatest man that has ever lived politically, the greatest man who has ever lived economically, the greatest man who has ever lived spiritually, is nothing more at any given moment, nothing more than a nose full, a nostril full of breath. How much air can you hold in your nose? Not very much. Well, that's all that the greatest man is, apart from the grace of God.

And when that breath is released, he has no certainty, no guarantee of another. Look how frail a creature that man truly is. Now, shouldn't that cause us to want to live for eternity? Shouldn't that cause us to be concerned about our mortality and about how we spend every moment? Because that one moment could be our last moment.

Stop regarding men, that's a command. Stop regarding men. We also hear in Scripture, stop fearing man.

He should not be regarded. He should not be feared. I'll tell you whom to fear.

Not the one who can destroy your body, but the one can destroy it all. And hell, that's the one that you should fear. Stop regarding men.

When we turn to the book of Psalms, the book of Habakkuk, there was a thing of people being tempted to regard evil men who seem to prosper. The Bible says don't do that. Their day is coming.

Or not necessarily evil men, but worldly men who have made great accomplishments and gained great fame for themselves. Don't regard them. You won't weep at the anniversary of George Washington's death.

No one in this room will be more famous or greater than he as far as men go, as far as history go. But you don't weep at the anniversary of his death. Men, no matter how great they are, they come and they go like breath in and out of a nostril.

And the Bible says in the book of Psalms that the place acknowledges them no more. Stop regarding men. And stop regarding the things of men.

The worldly men who gain great things, they gain nothing. The worldly men who gain great fame, power, expertise in science or literature or sports or whatever. Stop regarding them.

They'll be nothing but a pile of dust. Don't look to them. Don't hold them up.

But not just worldly men. What we would consider spiritual men. Stop regarding them.

What made any difference between them and the wicked? Who made any difference between them and the wicked? What do they have that they have not received and that they have received it? Why do they boast though they have not received it? Do you see? Stop regarding men, even spiritual men. Rich Mullins, who passed away a few years ago, a contemporary Christian singer, who I appreciated him because he seemed to have more of kind of a Keith Green type heart. And one of the songs that he wrote is just so beautiful.

He says, I will not despise my brother for his weakness, nor will I regard him for his strength. If he is weak, he is weak as we all are weak apart from the grace of God. And if he is strong, it is because of the sovereign grace of God working in his life.

So why should he be regarded? It is the Lord that should be regarded by you. It is the Lord that should be regarded. All things good, all things of life flow out from the heart of God.

All of it. Everything you have that is good, that is perfect, that is in any shape, form or fashion, worthy of being boasted about came from God, through the grace of God, through the cross of Jesus Christ. So stop regarding men.

Regard the God who gives good gifts to men. Regard Him. It says, stop regarding man.

I believe that the translation here is correct. It is an imperative, a negative. It is as though, it is not that he is warning people saying, now look, the possibility of regarding men is going to come up in your lifetime and you need to avoid that temptation.

No, they are already given to it. They are given to regarding men. That is what they are doing.

And He comes and He gives a command, stop doing it. I want you to know, you and I are born from the mother's womb. We are born inclined to regard men more than God.

Because we always have this tendency to want to worship ourselves rather than the divine, rather than deity. There is not a person in this room who has avoided this sin. And we ought to realize it is a terrible sin to set men up on a pedestal.

Because it is a denial of the power of God. It is a denial of the grace of God. And it is a denial of the need for God.

Stop regarding men. You are constantly inclined to do that. And so am I. And we need to stop it.

Just stop it. Now, why should he be esteemed? Why? Tell me one great thing about a man and I will be able to repeat this question. Why should he be esteemed? Well, he is a very dedicated man of prayer.

Okay, and who made him so? Well, he seems to know the Word when he teaches. And who gave him wisdom? Well, he is a fast runner. And who gave him the legs? Have you ever read the last chapters of the book of Job? That is why it is so pathetic.

So pathetic when you watch things like Discovery Channel. And you listen to people speak in awe of what nature has done. Regarding nature as though it pulled its own self up by its own bootstraps.

They don't realize how illogical what they are saying, how absurd what they are saying really is. Nature is not a thinking thing. But there is one behind nature.

It is God and He is to be regarded. In all things, He is to be regarded. You say, well now, Brother Paul, he put himself in a position where God could use him.

No, God put the man in a position so that God could use him. I recall when they talk, I have heard so many people used to struggle with this thing of, you know, there was a time when all the nation of Israel was held in the hand of Moses. When God said to Moses, get back Moses, I will destroy them all and I will make a nation out of you.

And Moses interceded. There was a time when all the nation of Israel was held in the hand of Moses. And Moses, in whose hand was he? Ok, Israel was in his hand.

Well, Moses was in God's hand. Stop regarding men. Stop regarding men.

Although there is one man you can regard. The man. The man for us.

The only man who was God's man. The servant of Yahweh, Jesus Christ. If you want to regard a man, then regard a man.

But he alone is worthy of being regarded. This is so very important when you see God use people. Or when you see God seems to have conformed a certain person to his image.

And we always want to find out what's their secret. What's their secret? What's their secret? I think it would be the grace of God. Always the grace of God.

Now, another verse that is very, very important to me. Is found in the book of Jeremiah. Chapter 2. Verse 5. Thus says the Lord.

What injustice did your fathers find in me that they went far from me? And walked after emptiness and became empty. Jeremiah 2.5 What injustice did your fathers find in me? What wrongdoing did I ever do? God said. That would give your fathers reason.

That would make it logical for them to walk away from me. What have I ever done? This is very good for stuffy church members. Who become offended quite easily.

So many people, if we were to dismiss church tonight and go around and visit. We'd find how many people. Countless people.

Who would say, well, I'm not in church anymore because so and so did me injustice. You know, the preacher did me injustice. Or the members were unjust with me.

Or someone offended me. I think our only question would have to be. And what injustice did you find in God that you went far from Him? You see.

If you and I were in a close relationship. You would be able to find reasons. Not to respond to me in a proper fashion.

You would be able to find reasons. Sound reasons of maybe why you should not give yourself in complete dedication to me. You would be able to find reasons why you keep me at arm's length.

You would be able to find reasons of why you were. For defending why you were angry with me or disappointed in me. I can give you all sorts of reasons.

Because I'm sinful, I'm fallible. Battle with the flesh. But can you find one reason to justify you pulling away from God? Can you find one reason? Now, there's something that needs to be looked at here just a little bit deeper.

And it's this. Among believers and among myself. I mean, even with my own self.

I would never. I don't think come out and say, I found something in the word that I don't like. I found something in the word that I think is unfair.

I don't think there's a believer that would say something like that. With regard to God's word. We never say things like, well, I don't think that's right.

And I don't agree with that. But we do with regard to God's providence, don't we? There's nothing God ever says that we're not in agreement with. But many times there are things God has ordained for our lives that we're not in agreement with.

And we buck up against. And we fight against. And we don't like.

And we try to wrestle out of that. Maybe a health problem. That's ordained of God, orchestrated by God.

Something, some weakness in our life. Some problem in our life that we wish was not there. And we fight against it.

And we try to make it go away. And we do all these things. And we're not willing to submit to the providence of God.

Or a loss of someone that we dearly love. Or a privilege or a gift that God has given is quickly taken away from us. And we get angry.

And we get mad. And we ask why? Why? Why? Why? See, most of us wouldn't say, no, there's injustice with God. But many times we'll complain against His providence for us.

Instead of resting in that providence. I was with a preacher. I was telling the pastor a few weeks ago named David Miller.

He was talking about the providence of God. And he's paralyzed from the neck down. And he said, you know, I was this great athlete.

Sixteen years old. A very tall man. Captain of my football team, baseball team, everything.

He goes, one day I just noticed my legs were starting to get weak. And then it wasn't but a short few weeks, I believe. He's just basically lost the use of his body.

He said, you'd think that would be enough, don't you? But then last year, his 22-year-old son, strong, strapping, just like him, was in a car accident and paralyzed from the waist down. From the neck down. And he says, what am I to do? Shall I rail? And he began to just quote from the book of Job, the last chapters.

Shall I speak against this God? You see, many times God will do things. And from this side of eternity, we will question it. We'll think why or this or that or try to find reasons of why this should not have happened.

But when we get to the heart of the matter, can we trust God with our lives? And can we rest in who He is and what He has ordained for us? One of the greatest, according to Thomas Watson, one of the greatest means we have of glorifying God is to gladly accept His providence in our life. To gladly accept, to peacefully accept His providence. You say, well, yes, I do as a Christian, but for many, many years I was lost.

And do you not think that the lost man is under the providence of God also? Everything in your life is providence. And God, there's no injustice in Him. Now, another thing that I find out about this verse, and it's very, very important to me.

It says, and they walked after emptiness and became empty. I've come to the point now, I'm not kidding you, when someone walks into me, and I don't want to be rude, cruel, or insensitive to their needs, but when someone comes into me and says, Brother Paul, I just feel empty. I ask them, are you walking after emptiness? What does it mean to walk after emptiness? Well, I think the Lord Jesus Christ, He is the great clarifier of the Old Testament, isn't He? He said, I have food to eat that you know not of.

My food is to do the will of my Father who sent me. Jesus was poor, Jesus suffered many things, but Jesus was never empty. And why was He never empty? Because He never walked after emptiness.

How is it that He never walked after emptiness? He was always walking after the will of God. And He was never empty. You see, we need to be very, very careful about people who are baptistic and people who, well, are concerned about Scripture, often will allow their theology to be defined by heretics.

And what I mean is, a heretic will say some extraordinarily wrong thing about the Holy Spirit, so we run completely the other direction, are afraid of the Holy Spirit. Or they'll talk about the promises of God in a way that's nothing more than presumption, and we won't even believe the promises of God. I want you to know, God promises fullness.

And from what I can see in Scripture, pretty much constant fullness. Now, He doesn't promise an easy life, He doesn't promise a long life, He promises trials, He promises persecution if you're godly, He promises all kinds of terrible things, but He never says, I'm going to leave you empty. And so Paul Washer can pretty much count on the fact that if he feels empty inside, he's walking after emptiness.

He's eating styrofoam, fodder, chaff, that which does not bring nutrients to his soul. Remember, Paul told Timothy, you know, to be nourished. Sound doctrine on the Word of God.

Are you empty? Then you could be walking after emptiness. You say, well, but I'm studying the Word, I'm studying theology, I'm studying this. That too, in itself, can be empty.

If Jesus is not, if the person of Jesus is not the center of it. Never forget, a true word of God is never, never separated from the God of the Word. This is a person.

I cannot cherish love letters from my wife and ignore my wife, the person of my wife. I cannot cherish promises and avoid the person. You can seek after so many things and so many good things and so many religious things, but not seek after Jesus and become empty.

Are you empty? Because you're seeking after emptiness. It can be a religious emptiness, seeking after emptiness. Now, this brings us to another verse for me.

I found this years ago, and it's Jeremiah also, chapter 9, verse 23. Thus says the Lord, let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might. Let not a rich man boast of his riches, but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord who exercises loving kindness, justice, and righteousness on the earth, for I delight in these things, declares the Lord.

This, of all the verses in the Bible, at least in the Old Testament, this is the one that is just... There are some verses that are all encompassing, that seem to summarize the totality of what it means to be obedient. And they are a type that will not let you get away with an artificial obedience. And what do I mean by that? You know, figuring out certain types of rules by which you govern your home can lead to nothing more than an artificial obedience.

It can be all external, and not of the heart. But then there's that verse, Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. There's just no way around that.

And you can't do that artificially, it just doesn't work. And you can seek to know the Word. I know many people who seek to know the Word, because the Word brings power.

In what way? Well, you know the Bible really, really well, people are going to ask you to preach, and they're really going to respect you. So many things can be done for all the wrong reasons. But when the commandment leads you straight into the person of God, and seeking Him, it's hard to be artificial.

It's very hard to be artificial. Now, look what he says. Thus says the Lord, Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom.

Well, we can take two different types of men here. The worldly wise, who might boast of his wisdom. Knows how to make money, knows how to meet people, he knows how to do all these things, knows how to climb the ladder.

Why should he not boast of his wisdom? I'll tell you why he should not boast of his wisdom. Because his wisdom, the wisest part of it, is foolishness. And leads to death.

It's not true wisdom. So the worldly wise should not boast of their wisdom, because their wisdom is foolishness and will end in hell and destruction. But what about the godly wise? The godly wise also should not boast in their wisdom.

Even wisdom that comes from God. Why? Because wisdom is not enough. Look at Solomon.

He had wisdom. It was not enough to keep his heart true. But also, even if you do have wisdom, and your heart is true, from where did that come? What did James tell you? It comes from God, who gives it without reproach.

And again, we go back to this, a verse that is so very important. What do you have that you have not received? And if you have received it, why do you boast? Everything you have, you've received. You've received it.

That's all. So don't boast in your wisdom. Don't boast in your biblical knowledge.

Biblical knowledge could be boasted in, if it were an end in itself. But it's not. You see, you can have biblical wisdom and biblical knowledge, and still be totally wrong.

Because all these things are given just to drive you into the heart of God, to cause you to love God more, and to be in a deeper, more intimate, personal relationship with Him. So don't boast in biblical wisdom. Why? Because it's not the end of all things.

You still have further to go. You're not yet in the kingdom of heaven. So don't boast in any sort of wisdom.

Don't boast in degrees. Don't boast in the wisdom of this world. Parents, be very, very careful.

You want your children to be well educated? Do you want that more? Do you want that more than them growing in the knowledge of God? Do you want to boast that they're doctors? Lawyers? Architects? City planners? Do you want to boast in these things about your children? Why? Why? Why? Wouldn't it be better for them to know the Lord? To understand and know Him? What's the greatest thing that could ever be spoken of? God tells us here it's the only thing of which we can boast. That we understand and know Him. Wouldn't you want that? We go on.

He says this, And let not the mighty man boast of his might. Oh, mighty man. Mighty man.

A little worm. A bug. A bacteria.

A bacteria. Enter in through the pores of your skin and you will be dead inside of 24 hours. You don't believe me? Go talk to Alexander the Great.

Conquered the whole world. Wept. Wept.

Young man. A boy. And he wept because there was nothing left to conquer.

He got sick. And died. This is something we spoke.

The pastor talked about outward strength. Bodily strength. Perishing.

All the things that you can see. I love the passage in Hebrews 11. It speaks about Moses.

He endured. Why did he endure? Because he saw the one who is unseen. Everything that your eyes can see.

Everything of physical strength and physical beauty. It could be nothing more than kindling for hell. It will all perish.

Every bit of it will perish. I watched a program several years ago of pro-NFL football players that were retired. Men who were all pro and all these types of things.

Many of them, after ten years of being out of play or whatever, many of them couldn't even walk. Many of them were practically drug addicts just to keep the pain out of their bodies. It doesn't matter.

We hear of some exceptional athlete, basketball player, track star, whose literally their heart is just perfection. Their pulse doesn't even hardly beat even in a dead run. And yet, in one second, they drop over on a free throw line and just die.

Mighty man. Handsome. Beautiful people.

I was speaking with a group of young people a few weeks ago and I asked them, I said, some of you who boast in your beauty, let me ask you, what did you do? What did you do to make yourself that way? You young men who boast in your strength, what did you do to make yourself that way? I mean, in the womb, what was it exactly that you did? Which way did you lay? How did you breathe? I mean, what is this great thing you have done to make yourself so beautiful? Well, we did nothing. Then why do you boast? Who made you that way? And why? They say, well, to glorify God. Yes.

Let me tell you something. The Puritans used to say, because they suffered a lot at the hands of the ungodly and many times at the hands of the prosperous and the wealthy and the beautiful and the aristocracy. One of them wrote, why does God allow the wicked to be rich and beautiful and strong? He said, for the same reason a farmer fattens up beef for the slaughter.

And for that very reason, God in His providence allows the wicked many times to be beautiful and strong and rich and powerful so that when He casts them down into hell, people see His power. That's frightening, isn't it? And that's so that God can bestow the true gifts on the unseemingly, on those who are not beautiful or noble or wise or strong. As a matter of fact, if you're wealthy, you should tremble.

If you're physically strong, be afraid. If you're beautiful, concern yourself with this. It is not the wise, for the most part, nor the strong, nor the rich, nor the beautiful that God has called, but the poor and the ignoble and the uncultured that He has called so that all the wisdom and all the strength and all the talk of men might be turned into foolishness.

You see, the very things that the world tells you should be a source of your pride, the Bible tells you ought to be a source of your fear. A source of your fear. I'll never forget, before my first boy was born, Ian, someone came to me and they said, well, you know, Brother Paul, what are you going to have? I said, well, they tell us he's going to be a boy.

Well, you know, Brother Paul, the only thing that's important is that he's healthy. I said, really? He said, yes. I said, I disagree with you.

He said, what do you mean? I said, I know a lot of healthy young men who died and went to hell. I know a lot of healthy, strong young men who put their hope in their own strength and their own ability and did not honor God. I know a bunch of strong, beautiful people who their strength and their beauty caused them to trust in themselves and they were never weak before the Lord and they were never a useful instrument in His hand.

Oh, that my little boy would be broken in a million pieces. Oh, that my little boy would even be deformed, yea, weak, crippled, if a heart burning for God would be put in Him. If a dependence upon the Almighty would be created in Him.

If a looking unto God would be put in Him. So, I rejoice. I'm going to take Ian camping, hopefully in a couple of weeks.

I've been afraid to do it because in the night time, he has that like child's asthma. They think he may grow out of it. He may not.

Sometimes I'll hear him coughing in there and we'll have the little steamers on and we give him the thing and everything and I think to myself, Lord, have You answered my prayer? You mean in healing him? No, in ordaining this for him. Lord, have You answered my prayer that he not be strong? We came up here this week for one reason. He is as flat footed as a duck.

He will never run fast. Never. And I say, oh Lord, have You answered my prayer? Are You fencing this little boy in so that he not be strong? So that he not run with the swift or lift with the strong? So that he even maybe be the object of jesting and not honor for the world in their eyes? Lord, have You answered my prayer? Many people hear me talk like that and they don't even understand what I'm saying.

They're even angry that I would say such a thing. I have lived more years now than when I first started. I have learned things.

And I have learned that the mighty man should not boast of his might nor gain pleasure from it. It's just a repetition, but there it is. That the rich man should not boast of his riches.

The Bible doesn't say it's a sin to be rich. It really doesn't. Anyone who tells you that has got some serious problems with regard to the doctrine of sanctification.

It is not a sin to be rich. But the one who is has a high calling upon him from God to use his riches conformed to the will of God. I think of many Christian movements down through the centuries.

I believe the Moravians would be an example and others that were greatly benefited. Even George Whitefield's ministry greatly benefited by people who were very wealthy coming alongside and helping him. The Bible doesn't say it's a sin to be rich.

Be very, very careful of our false ideas of piety. It's a sin to lust after riches and it's a sin not to be content with God's providence in your life. I am not a rich man.

I am to be content with that. But if God so exalts a man to be rich, it is not a sin. But that man is required to be a good steward.

A good steward. He's not required to live like me. He's not required to live in the same house I do.

But he is required to be a good steward. But, boasting in riches is to take credit for yourself that is not due. Upon the wicked, from where do riches come? From God.

As a means of blessing? No, as a means of judgment. He gives the wicked wealth so that on the day of judgment their punishment is even more severe. On the godly, he can give wealth as a blessing.

But if it is from God, if it is from God, then why do you boast, man, about your riches? If you have enterprise, if you have ability in business, if you know how to do certain things, from where did all that wisdom come? It came from God. If you can preach, from where did that come? It came from God. If you can do anything, it came from God.

So why do you boast? There's nothing that we have obtained that has not been given to us. Now, he says something here. He says, But let him who boasts, boast of this.

Now, we have to go at this in a biblical way. We need to take in all of Scripture when we say this. But let him who boasts, boast of this, that he understands and knows me.

Now, we also know that understanding God and knowing God is also a gift. It is also a gift. So when he talks about boasting and knowing God, it is not, look what I have done, I know God.

But boasting that one knows God is actually boasting in the grace of God that has made God known. What is the real thing being said here? Not, hey, look at me, I understand God. Hey, look at me, I know God.

But what's being said here, what is being boasted is this, look what God has done for me. He has made Himself known to me. He has made Himself known to me.

What do you want for yourself? And what do you want for your children? What do you want? What do you want? Because that will tell me a lot about the condition of your heart. What do you want? Well, Brother Paul, I want to be used of God. Why is that? Have you ever thought about that? Why do you want to be used of God? I remember praying in seminary and in college, you know, we'd all, us young guys, be down praying all night, prayer meetings.

Oh God, I just want to be used by You. I just want You to use me. I think that would have been more biblical if I would have prayed, Oh God, use my friend and let me carry his bags.

What do you want? Do you want to be used of God? Why? Do you want to help him? Does he need help? Do you want to be important? Do you want to feel useful? Have you listened to too much fundamentalist preaching? You want a big reward. You know, one of those 80 pound crowns on your head. Why do you want to be used? Think about this.

This is important. This is not a dramatic pause. This is important.

You go to marry a girl. What do you want? She says. You respond, well, I want a good wife.

I want a good life. I want to be happy. I want to live with someone.

We're compatible. Do you hear what you're saying? It's selfishness all over it, isn't it? Why do you want to be married? I want to know you. I have looked at many fields and many pearls.

But in you I seem to have found that pearl of great price. And I want to obtain that pearl. To know you.

To spend my life. I think it is valuable to spend the rest of my life pursuing one thing. The knowledge of you.

Now that's another kind of answer. It's the same way with the Lord. You know, there are many men and many women who want certain things for themselves.

They want it for themselves. And it has nothing to do with the knowledge of God. There are many ministers.

I mean, they're all over. It's unbelievable with this new idea we have of Christian ministry and what it means to be a success. You know, this guy's really doing something.

Does he want to know God? Does he want to grow in an intimate, personal relationship with God? Remember Martha, Martha? Lord, I'm doing all this stuff for you. Look at my sister. Martha, your sister has honored me more than you ever could with all these things.

What's your son going to be? Oh, he's going to go to college. Going to do this. Going to do that.

What's your son going to be? Oh, God's called him in the ministry. Seems like he has a real gift of preaching. Boy, I think God's going to use that boy.

Really? What's your son going to be? You know, he's a strange one, that boy of mine. He seems to have a strange, enduring desire to know God. You know, sometimes I think he's lazy.

He doesn't give himself to things that I think he should give himself to those things and really succeed. He doesn't even care to succeed in preaching that much. It's just strange.

It's just like he just wants to be in the Word and he wants to seek God and pray and he walks and he just wants to know God. And I just wish he was... Of course, that's all good and everything, but you know there's the other two. Oh really? What do you want? You see how much the world can enter in and get us, capture us, steal us away, ruin us, make us think we're walking in the truth when exactly we're doing the opposite.

Let him who boasts, boast in this, that he understands me. That he knows me. And that word there, know, you know, that's been beat to pieces, but it's true.

It's talking about an intimate, personal relationship. As intimate as it gets. That he understands who I am and he is in an intimate, personal relationship with me.

Let him who boasts, for I delight in these things. For you guys that are thinking about ministry and thinking about being used of the Lord, let me warn you, the Bible never says God delights in great preaching. It never says really that He delights in great service.

He delights in someone hard-pressed after Him. In the same way, you women couldn't understand this better than any man. You're not so much delighting in, well, I've got a roof over my head or, you know, food's on the table or, you know, my husband's a provider.

You delight in the things that we as husbands, for the most part, fail in. That man is just pursuing hard after you. Wants to be with you.

Wants to know you. All these things. That's what you delight in.

The others are just things that have to be done. And in the same way, you have to breathe to stay alive. But the real delight comes from that.

The real delight comes from that. Let me warn you, I don't care who you are here, you are far more influenced by ungodly thoughts and ungodly thinking and ungodly theories on what it means to truly live. You are far more influenced by these things than you know.

And I warn you that this preacher is also. And that's what I want to take you to. My last life verse.

Let's go to 2 Corinthians. I'm trying to decide which one would be better. Let's just go to 2 Corinthians 10-5.

We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God. We are taking every thought captive. Obedience of Jesus Christ.

We are destroying speculations. What are speculations? Everything that does not conform to God's will. Every thought that does not conform to God's thoughts.

Everything that is not in agreement with God's truth is nothing more than a speculation. Now, this has so much bearing to it. First of all, I want you to know, those of you who are would-be counselors, so many people think they are much wiser than they actually are.

You know, grandma wisdom, grandpa wisdom. Well, I've lived a long time. Listen to me.

Fools live a long time. Just because someone's lived a long time doesn't mean they have wisdom. I mean, turtles live long.

There are turtles older than this country. I'm not going to go to them for counseling. You know, most people, even within the context of the church, the true church of Jesus Christ, there are so many people willing to open up their mouth without having a Bible verse.

Let me just give you a little bit of counseling on your counseling. It's this. Unless that statement you're going to make is backed up by a Bible verse you can go to and point with your finger or quote, and keep your mouth shut, because you will save yourself from a lot of harm on the day of judgment when you will have to answer for every idle word.

We are so full of speculations today. There's a way that seems right unto a man. It's a speculation.

Everyone did what was right in their own eyes. Well, it seems to me that's the best thing to do. Well, if I were you, all of that is speculation.

And how many thoughts in our hearts are nothing more than speculations? How many things? It's unbelievable. When you begin to try to discern how much of what we think, which governs everything we do, how much of what we think is actually not biblical at all. Things we want for ourselves.

Things we want for our children. Is it biblical? Well, I want to have comfort for my children. Does God want my children to have comfort? Or would He rather they be raised in the middle of the Amazon fighting every day of their life with terrible flies and mosquitoes? Well, you know, I want the best for my children.

Okay, what's the best? And that would be conformity to the image of Jesus Christ. Are you willing for every one of your dreams that you've ever had about your children to be crushed so that God's will might be done? Like I said, there was a lady who served very much in this certain church and every time I went there to preach, she would not allow her son to come. Because she was afraid that through my preaching he'd be called into missions.

They had plans for him. He was going to be a dentist. No time for missions.

What are your dreams? You see, there's so much that the world tells us and it goes back to what was being said in most of the music tonight. You realize most of the music was focused on eternity. So much of what was said, especially the last song, focused on eternity.

I want my sons to stand before God and hear, Well done, my good and faithful servants. Enter into the joy of your master. That's all I want.

And he says, we are destroying speculations. Now, remember, speculations, every thought that does not conform to the knowledge of God is a speculation. Okay? Everything that's not in agreement with God's Word is a human speculation.

It's wrong. It has no founding. No grounding.

If what you're thinking has no grounding in Scripture, it's a speculation. Alright? Now, how are you to deal with these type of thoughts? These speculations? How are you to deal with them? I'll tell you how you're to deal with them. You are to make no compromise and no truce.

Look at the word he uses. Destroying speculations. Well, let's be careful now.

We don't want to get too radical on this thing. Well, there are some things in which you can get too extreme. But you can never be too extreme about truth.

It says destroy speculations. Don't make a truce with them. Don't go halfway.

Destroy speculations. Because if you don't... Now, here's something I want you to think about. In the Old Covenant, now I'm going to push this maybe a little too much.

But when I think of the Old Testament and the work in the Old Testament and the word destroy. The word destroy. It comes up in two ways primarily if you think about it.

One, if something was so wicked it was under the ban. Put it under the ban. What did they say? Anybody under the ban? Achan? Whatever? What did they do? They destroyed, didn't they? They didn't just destroy halfway.

I mean, anything associated with one under the ban was destroyed. Not just the immediate thing. Everything that had anything to do with the ban was destroyed.

Achan, his whole family, everybody. Gone. Destroyed.

Also, they enter into the land of Canaan, don't they? Every one of the Canaanites. Kill the children. Kill everybody.

Kill everybody. And the ones you do not kill, they will be like thorns. Alright? I would not doubt, in my own mind, it seems to me that maybe Paul had this in his own mind.

Destroying speculations. Every residue of worldly thinking left in you must be destroyed, because as a man thinks, so is he. And even, you know, there's so much that we think I'm appalled every day of my own life at how much I think that is not conformed to the will of God, and those things control my life.

My relationship with my wife. My relationship to people. My relationship to my brothers and sisters in Christ.

My way of thinking. My way of talking. My way of determining success or failures of a certain day.

Everything about me. So much is governed by ungodly thinking that just leads to destruction. And that is why we're to be renewing our mind.

I will tell you this. I would say a great deal, if not all, of the depression I have ever suffered has come from speculations. It's come from wrong thinking.

The illustration I'll always use, for example, is a young girl comes and says, you know, she's depressed. She can't get involved in studies. She's grumpy.

All these different things. And you ask her why. She comes to you for counseling.

You ask her why. And she says, well, I'm just this way because I'm ugly and no one loves me. Well, you know, a lot of counselors would sit there and put their arm around her and talk to her for two years and try to give her some self-esteem.

Here's what I would do. I would say, you've just made two statements. You have declared that there are two beliefs in your life that are governing absolutely everything you do.

Now, let's go to Scripture and see if those two statements are true. Because if they're not true, you need to repent of believing a lie. You've said you're ugly.

Now, what's really going on, isn't it, you're not that ugly, it's just you're not the most beautiful and you don't like not being the center of everything. So what it really is here is self-centeredness. Also, you're railing against God because He did not make you as you wanted to be made.

Because, again, you want to be center of everyone's universe. So now it's not so much moping, it's repenting, isn't it? And no one loves you. Do you realize that you've made an accusation against God and called Him a liar? Well, how have I done that? God says He loves.

You say He doesn't. You've accused God of not loving you. And also, let me ask you, your parents, did they beat you? Did they not feed you when you were little? Did they lock you in a barn? Well, no, no.

Well, you're falsely accusing then your parents. You're saying your parents do not love you. That's what you said, dear lady.

You said you're ugly and no one loves you. Both these statements are untrue. They are not true at all.

They are governing your life and you need to repent of believing a lie. You see how speculations can destroy? And you also see why most Christian counseling is nothing more than baptized psychology that never brings healing? Destroying speculations. They have to be destroyed.

Now, not only do they have to be destroyed, but not only are we not destroying them, brothers and sisters in Christ, we are pumping them into our heads. You say, how am I doing that? Every time you turn on a television set and are not careful about what's going on and what's being said, every time you listen to ungodly counsel, you know something? It's not only a sin to gossip, it's a sin to listen to it. Did you know that? It's a sin to associate with a lie anyway, any shape, form or fashion.

There is so much of us. That is why the Bible is always commanding us to stay away from the things of the world because they'll influence you. They'll influence you.

And also, not only that, but constantly renewing our mind in the Word of God. Constantly renewing our mind. Not being conformed to this world, but being transformed by the renewing of our mind to begin to think as God thinks.

What a peaceful person. What a happy person would you be if you thought as God thought? If your thoughts were like His? You say, well, no, brother Paul. God's made that statement already that our thoughts are not His thoughts and His ways are higher than our ways.

Understand the context. He's just stating something. He's not saying that we shouldn't seek to have thoughts like His.

He's just saying that by and large, we don't. And that's what causes most of the trouble. It says, destroying speculations, destroying in our minds everything that does not conform to the image of Christ.

And that deals with everything. Let me give you an example. Girls, give me a biblical description of beauty.

Maybe that's why you're so miserable about not being as pretty as you want to be. You don't know what pretty is. If you thought God's thoughts on beauty, maybe you'd be a lot happier with yourself.

What's God say about what's beautiful? Do you see what I'm saying? Because I'm not successful. Okay, what's successful? Constantly, when I go and preach somewhere and God does something or someone comes and talks to me and these thoughts will start coming into my mind. You know, Paul, if you just give yourself more to these things, you could really become something.

Well, okay. Maybe. But, I would have to neglect my wife and my two little boys.

I wouldn't be able to go fishing with them. Camping would be out of the question. You could make that magazine a whole lot better if you would just do this.

Yeah, I could. But, you'd be a success if... Okay, but what's a success? Is not a success a man who is obedient to the simple will of God? And that's all? Regardless of where it takes him or what it takes him away from? Destroying speculations. And it says, every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God.

Now, there's two things I want us to look at. Speculations and every. Notice it doesn't say destroying the speculations as though they were a precise group.

No, anything that comes under speculation is to be destroyed. And every lofty thing, not some lofty things. You don't leave a residue of it again.

You leave it there, it's going to keep growing. It's just like a cancer. They say the most terrible thing that can happen taking out a cancer is when doctors go in and open someone up to get that cancer, they run the risk of not getting all of it.

Because if they get only a part of it and they've opened up that body, that cancer is going to grow. It's the same way spiritually. Maybe that's the reason for cancer.

I don't know. It's a perfect illustration for what happens spiritually. You take a part of that.

You start getting just rid of a little part. Or get rid of most of those lofty things, but hold on to some of those. Though some of those will become more powerful in your life than all of those put together.

So again, we're going into Canaan and we're going to literally destroy everything. Now, lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God. I don't have to apologize for preaching so long because you know me.

You've probably never thought of this maybe. Of how terrible and frightening this statement is. You see how terrible this is? Every lofty thing... Now, that's bad.

Pride is bad. But, raised up against. Those have the words.

In that is the idea of a siege. Laying siege. In what way? Laying siege against the throne of God.

When you allow your life to be formed by thoughts, when you allow thoughts that do not conform to the image, the will of God in your life, and you dwell on those thoughts, it is like you have declared war on God. You have laid siege against His throne to knock Him off and kill Him. I was with a pastor a few weeks ago who just a lot of things he told me just made me marvel.

And he was talking about that passage about while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. And he says, while we so hated God that we were storming the throne hoping to tie ropes around His ankles and His wrists and His neck and drag Him off the throne and slaughter Him, while we were doing that, Christ died for us. These things... Listen.

The Puritans would always say this is not an inferior prince. And that's very, very important with this passage. You've got to realize one deviant thought entered into the head of Eve and Adam and an entire world, universe, was cast into moral darkness under the judgment.

You see, you're not dealing with just sins against somebody like you or somebody like me. These thoughts, deviant things, are railings against God. They are enemies of God.

They're to be done away with. They're to be hated. They're to be loathed.

They are. Every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God. And what else does it say? Something very, very beautiful here.

We are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ. Now, there are a lot wiser people and they probably know exactly what this means. I am not really sure.

I'm not really sure exactly what this means, but I do know this. It has with it the idea of bringing our thought life under the lordship of God. To bring our thought life into conformity with God's will.

To be obedient as Christ was obedient. Christ, our great example. Christ, our standard for virtue.

Christ, our standard for morality. Everything about Christ. To bring ourselves into conformity with Christ.

To seek to be like Christ. To seek to live in absolute subjection to the will of God. Absolute subjection to the will of God.

Now, here's something that is very, very important that I want you to understand. In the Bible, you can't skip over step 3 to get to step 4. If you step over step 3, step 4 is not going to happen. How much more, if you step over step 1, ignore step 1, do you really think you are going to be able to go on and really build? If you don't lay a foundation, if you don't lay a foundation, do you think that anything built on top of it is going to stand? We are so, because we are of the West, many of us anyway, we are so external and we are so doing and it all begins with your thought life.

Your thought life. Your inner being. And then everything else flowing out from that.

It's not just our actions. You see, if you just deal with your actions, you can be quite deceived. It is to deal with the person.

It is to deal with our thoughts. It is to deal with our way of thinking. To be renewed in our mind.

To be renewed in our mind. To be renewed. I have not made much progress in the things of God.

I do not believe. But just out of my understanding, very small understanding, after 22 years, I understand a little bit more about grace than I did when I started. This is just one example.

Just a little bit more. Maybe a fraction more. If grace were the distance between here, Kirksville, and the farthest star that exists, if understanding grace was that distant, I've traveled about a quarter of an inch.

But that quarter of an inch has brought more peace to my life than you could ever imagine. Just growing this much farther away from wrong thinking, and this much closer to right thinking, has brought more peace to the heart of this preacher than I can even describe to you. Now, I don't have all the peace that I should, but there's a world of difference between right now and 22 years ago.

So, let not a wise man boast of his wisdom. Let not the mighty man boast of his might. Let not a rich man boast of his riches, but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me.

That he understands and knows Me. That I am the Lord who exercises loving kindness, justice, and righteousness on earth. For I delight in these.

You know, when the guys I work with do something right, that's good. I give my seal of approval. But I can't really say I delight over it.

When my little boy comes up to me and jumps in my arms, I delight over that. I delight over that. Let's pray.

Father, I thank You for Your Word. And I thank You for the privilege of being able to share it here this evening. And I pray, Lord, that it will bring some measure of grace and blessing to Your people.

And Lord, if there is someone here tonight that does not know You, O Lord, would You open up their heart and their minds that they might know You and worship You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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