

The Standard Of God

by Donny Coulter

This sermon emphasizes the importance of dwelling on the whole standard of God, loving and doing what is right because it is right. It discusses the need to focus on salvation rather than condemnation, using the example of Jesus' approach to sinners. The message encourages reflecting God's standard in thoughts, words, and actions, while extending grace and love to those outside the lines of God's standard.

Scripture: John 8:1, John 3:16, Philippians 4:8, 2 Timothy 3:16, Proverbs 6:16

Topics: "God's Standard", "Grace and Love"

Description

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Transcript

Lord Jesus, as I stand here and listen to the saints sing, hear the noise of their fellowship, and hear them as they sing their prayers, you are worthy. I do sing a song like words that say, I'm desperate for you, I'm lost without you with a little bit of conviction. Lord, because if I'm honest, I'm not sure that that is a completely truthful statement to sing.

And yet, as worthy of you as you are, and as powerful as you are, you are mindful of us. And I know right now that there are worship services going on all over the world. But I have to believe, God, I have to believe and see that your heart is moved, that there's a smile on your face as your people have participated this morning.

I pray, Lord, that as we open your word, what I believe to be one of the most important parts of this service today is the word of God. It is definitely not because I teach it. It's because it is the word of God.

I pray that you would help us to to give you and your word the honor and the respect that it is due. I pray that you would help us to listen to your Holy Spirit as he teaches, as he challenges us to think, to dwell on things that are of God, things that are right. I pray for the conviction of the Holy Spirit on our lives and our hearts for the attitudes that we may have.

I pray that we would be able to think on things that are right and just, so that, Lord, our lives are practiced in things that are right and just. I pray that you would give us the ability to respond to your Holy Spirit the grace that we need to respond to your Holy Spirit. I pray for me, Lord, to help me.

Help me, Lord, to just trust you as we talk about your word, to leave it in your hands and trust you with it. I pray that I would speak nothing more, nothing less than your heart, your mind, your emotions. And may your Holy Spirit use me as a vessel to be able to teach.

Lord, we pray for those here today that have not accepted you as their Savior, have never made a commitment to the gospel. I pray that you would speak to them this morning. God, that you would open their eyes so that they might see the glorious light of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

We trust you with all of this, God, because it's your work and not ours. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Philippians chapter 4. Philippians chapter 4. Let's do a little review to catch us up. Begin with verse 6. Be anxious for nothing. Do not be anxious for anything.

The word says, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. How do we deal with anxious thoughts? We turn them into requests to God. How do we deal with worry? We turn that into supplications and prayers to God along with our thanksgiving.

And when we do that, we see that the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, and I want you to make sure that you make a connection with what we're talking about in terms of the mind and what we dwell on, is because if you look at this, anxious thoughts here, the way that we deal with those is by praying about them. It's by giving thanks. And when we do that, we experience the peace of God.

Totally opposites. Anxiousness, worry, peace. Total opposites.

So we experience the peace of God and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding. Make sure that you make the connection. All understanding that will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Do you see the connection now of peace and the mind as we have been talking about this battlefield of the mind that there is to be able to deal with those anxious thoughts? We make those requests made known to God and the peace of God, which passes all understanding, it will guard your heart and mind. Now look at the next verse. Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever things are true, and we talked about that a couple of weeks ago, whatever things are true, remember this battlefield of the mind, this battlefield for holiness in our lives, we are responding to the command to be holy.

That's what we're studying, is how do we respond to the command, be holy as I am holy. Get your mind ready for action, Peter says, so that you can be holy as I am holy. And so we're here, we're talking, it says finally, Paul says finally, brothers and sisters, whatever things are true, I love the fact that he starts with truth.

As he begins this journey through these eight things that we are to dwell on, he begins with true. Whatever is true, remember that our struggle is not with power in this battle for the spiritual battle that we experience. It is not a battle of power because you have been given all divine power for daily living and godliness.

You've been given that. So it's not a battle of power, it is a battle of truth. And our stability, our ability to stand strong is not based on power because we have power, it's based and found in truth.

We are to pursue and to dwell on things that are true. Last week, we talked about things that are noble, or things that are honest, or things that are honorable. And we said that those are the things that are worthy of respect.

That we are to begin to think on things that are lofty and not trashy. That we are to dwell on things that have integrity, not things that are dishonest, not things that are dishonorable, and not things that lack integrity. That we are to dwell on those things.

When those opposites come into our minds, we are to repel and to remove them, renovate them out of our minds, and replace them with thoughts that are honorable. Now today, we are talking about whatever things are just. Now I thought I might be able to take two of the words and put them in one.

Not gonna happen. For those of you that know me, it's just not gonna happen. Let's talk about what it means to be just.

Another word or translation would be right. So whatever things are right, or whatever things are just, or whatever things are righteous, think, dwell. Remember we talked about dwelling, and dwelling is not just sitting down and thinking about it a little bit.

It is a careful consideration. It is a meditation. Some of your versions will use the word meditate on these things.

Dwell on these things. Think on these things. So it's not just a passing thought.

It is something that we dwell on, that we linger on, that we carefully consider, that we begin to use the ability to think and reason that God has given to every one of us. God has given us all that ability, and as we use that, we are thinking on or dwelling on things that are right. What does it mean to dwell on things that are right? Well, the word itself means that which is in perfect harmony with God's standards.

It means, it speaks of those things which conform to the perfect standard of God's righteousness. Setting the bar high, isn't it? Pretty high. The Greeks used to use the word to describe a person who was duty-bound to the gods or duty-bound to another person.

In other words, it was used to describe somebody that their whole life was committed to a god or a person, and they did everything that was required to do that. So they were seen as a just person or as a right person, righteous person. In the New Testament, though, throughout the New Testament, it's oftentimes used as referring to those who are upright, to those who are keeping the laws of God.

It refers to those who walk a straight and narrow way. It refers to those who live an innocent and guiltless life. Now, in your mind, you're probably thinking, well, who would that be? Well, that would be Jesus, right? But it's actually used to describe people as well in the New Testament.

The word is used to describe others. It can be translated righteous, which is a state of being right or of right conduct that is judged by a divine standard or God's divine standard. Somebody in the Bible that you might remember who was a just person was Cornelius.

Remember Cornelius? From Acts chapter 9, 10, Cornelius was an Italian, not an Israelite, but he was considered to be a just or a righteous man. The reason was because he did pursue God and followed the things of God. Let's look at some of the uses in Scripture.

John chapter 17. You don't have to look at them specifically. Write them down.

I don't know if I can't remember if I included these in your notes. I'm sorry. I don't remember if I did.

But the uses in Scripture, John chapter 17, referring Jesus is praying to God the Father and he refers to God the Father as the righteous father. That is the same word as our word here in Philippians chapter 4 and verse 8. Acts chapter 3, chapter 7, chapter 22, 1 John chapter, and 1 John refers to Jesus as the righteous one or the just one. Jesus the righteous.

Same word that we're talking about in Philippians chapter 4 and verse 8. So there's, it's used to describe Jesus. It's used to describe God the Father. It's also used to describe those who live by faith.

For the just or the righteous shall live by faith. Galatians chapter 3, Hebrews chapter 10. For the just shall live by faith.

Those who are right or righteous are the ones who live by faith. So it describes those who walk by faith. James chapter 5 speaks of the righteous man who prays and his prayer is empowered to work in situations because of his righteous desire for God.

Says the power of the righteous man, his prayer avails much. So in Scripture, it's used to describe, it's an adjective that's used to describe that which meets the standard of God which follows the divine standard. And here in Philippians, you and I are told to dwell on that which is right.

That which is just. That which is righteous. That we are to put our minds on, we are to dwell on, carefully consider to meditate on things that are right.

The place to know what is right is pretty much a given, isn't it? The place to know God's standards is His Word. The place to know it, to memorize it, to follow the standard of God is found in the Word of God. Let me say to you, it is not found in the church.

Although the church ought to be the bearer of the standard of God, should they not? The body of Christ as a whole ought to be the bearer of the standard of God, but it is not found in the church. The standard is not established in the church. It is followed in the church.

The standard is established in God's Word and His character. The standard is not found and determined from a denomination. When the denominations that we are affiliated with, when they find themselves falling away from the standard of God, it is time for the church to remove their affiliation from the denomination.

I am not calling out any denomination. I'm saying that I support denominations, but I'm saying that the standard of God is not found in the denomination. It's not found in the old writers and the old preachers either.

The standard of God is not found. And listen, I study all week long. I read from old preachers.

I try to get information to understand the Scriptures better from these old writers and old preachers. But they are not the standard. They write about the standard, but they do not establish the standard.

Although we should be able to watch them and observe them, and if they meet the standard, follow them. Isn't that what Paul said in verse 9? Look what he says in verse 9. The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do. Practice this is some of your versions.

Practice this and the God of peace will be with you. Yes, it's okay to watch, listen to, and observe those who are talking about, writing about, and living the standard, and, in a sense, following them. That's what Paul said.

But they are not the standard. The standard is God Himself. And the Word of God has established for us the standard.

We find that standard just in that one place. Turn to 2 Timothy chapter 3. 2 Timothy chapter 3 verses 16 and 17. I will emphasize again, I hope you don't get lazy with the electronic screen.

It's really for those who are online, and it really should not allow them to be lazy either. If you're at home and watching, you should have your Bible out too. 2 Timothy chapter 3 verse 16 and 17.

All Scripture is given by the inspiration of God. All Scripture is God-breathed. In the same way, on that day of creation, when God breathed into the nostrils of man life, God has breathed into the Word of God life.

They're God-breathed words. Therefore, they are the words of God Himself. And those words are profitable.

They are profitable for, here it tells us four things. They are profitable for, number one, doctrine. That is, the teachings of God or the teachings about God.

They are profitable for reproof. They are profitable for correction. They are profitable for instruction in righteousness.

And the reason why that they are profitable, and when we follow them, is that the person of God, the people of God, the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. Does that help us to understand how we pursue this idea of the command of holiness? How we work towards holiness? Here he says that when we listen to the inspired Word of God and let it do its profitable work in our lives, then we are equipped and complete to do the work of God, the work of holiness. Now, we'll stay back.

You have in your scripture, or in your notes, if you have one of those, you have a little picture in your notes. I want to quickly go through this. I've done hundreds of Bible studies with this verse, and you probably may have seen them before.

If you've been connected with my teaching, I may have even used it here. But I want us to see this in connection with the standards that we're talking about, God's standards. To me, you know I'm a visual person.

I love pictures. I love drawing stuff. You go in my office, you'll find all kinds of drawings, just like you find here on your notes.

Let's talk about this for a second. We have the doctrine, the doctrine of God, or the teachings of God. Now, I want you to picture that with me.

As you'll see in your drawing, you have two large lines that go straight across your page, okay? There's a line, there's a line. So doctrine, here he says that the inspired Word of God is profitable for doctrine. It is teaching us the yellow lines in which we operate our lives.

Do you follow my thinking and my thought here? That the doctrine of God, the teachings of God, teach us the lines that we are to operate in. Remember what it means when we said we're defining what it means to be right is operating within the standard, the perfect standard of God's perfect righteousness? Here is the standard. The doctrine of God, or the teaching about God or of God, establishes for us the standard by which we live.

So then we put this up top. Oh man. The standard, God's standard.

So those lines on your drawing, you can see those lines, top and bottom, are the standard of God in which we operate as a believer. We live this life within the lines. We'll say it's a roadway.

Down this roadway of life, we are operating in the lines that are established by the doctrine of God. Quickly, because it's not what I want to lean on today, it says that it's also, the Word of God is also profitable for reproof. How many of you can stay in those lines all the time? Raise your hand.

Oh, come on. Man, what's wrong with you guys? Nobody can operate consistently, constantly within the standard that's been established by God in His Word, okay? We can't do that. And on occasion, we go off, don't we? We find ourselves in the ditch.

Well, there's that arrow that goes down off and in the ditch. Well, at that point, the Word of God, the inspired Word of God comes in and it's profitable for reproofing. It's profitable to say to you, Donnie, you're in the ditch.

You're not in the lines, you're in the ditch. In your attitude, in your actions, in your thoughts, you are in the ditch. That's where the Word of God, if I never have the input of the Word of God, I don't know I'm in the ditch.

And so I have the Word of God which says, reproof, it reproves me and says, okay, Donnie, you're in the ditch. And I say, okay, I'm sorry, I confess. And then it gives correction.

So I'm in the ditch and the Word of God then brings me back up on the road. It corrects me. It brings me back in the lines.

You get it? Are you following me? So I'm in the ditch. God forbid that I'm in the ditch here all the time. But then the Word of God is here to correct me and get me back on the road.

Back within the lines and the standards that God has established for himself. Follow me? And then it's profitable for instruction in righteousness. And I call that how to stay on the road.

So there you have it. The Word of God establishes a standard. When I get off the road of God, it reproves me.

It corrects me. And then it helps me to understand how not to get off the road again. Now, I usually don't listen very well.

And I have to learn that over and over again if you're like me. But the point is, is that if we are thinking about the standard of God, if our mind is on the standard of God, which is what he says we ought to dwell on, then if I'm dwelling on that, then I begin to act that out. Verse 9, Philippians 4 and verse 9. Now, I'm probably going to get in trouble.

You guys, sometimes I say that. And you guys, some of you take a deep breath. Um, I may end up offending people on either side of this issue.

But I wanted to pick something this week to talk about. Because you wanted practical, here we go. Let's talk about homosexuality.

You can't talk about that. This is online. Within the standard of God, is it mentioned? It is.

Leviticus chapter 18. Leviticus chapter 20. First Corinthians chapter 6. Verses 9 and 10.

Just to name a few. It is mentioned. And if you will look into that, you will establish the fact that homosexuality is outside the lines.

I think that we could agree, if we take an objective look at the word of God, if we look at the word of God as our source of truth, then we will discover that homosexuality is outside of the lines of the standard of God. Amen. Now, wait a minute.

Be careful. It's an abomination, we say. And because it is outside, it is definitely outside of the standard of God.

And God uses words like abomination. The unfortunate thing that happens is, is that we, in turn, take that and turn that towards the person and not towards the action. Sure, we've got the standard down because it's an abomination.

Yes, it is an abomination. The word says so. You know what an abomination is? It means that it disgusts God or God hates it.

Okay? It's an abomination. And we hear those words and then we're tempted. And oftentimes, not just tempted, it's the only response we have is to treat those people, people who are outside the lines with disdain and disrespect and dishonor.

You know what else is an abomination in the word of God? Lying lips. Proverbs chapter 12 and verse 22. Why don't we treat liars with the same disdain as we treat those who are homosexuals? Why don't we talk about liars the way that we talk about homosexuals? Those who justify the wicked and put down the righteous are an abomination.

Everyone who is arrogant is an abomination. You ready for this one? Oh boy, be careful. Those who cheat in business, as a matter of fact, the proverb says that those who have the weights out of balance.

Those who cheat in business, may I even say those who cheat on their taxes. It's an abomination! Ungodly offerings. The fee of the prostitute.

Ungodly offerings are an abomination. Here's my point. We have to reflect God's standard in all of our thoughts and our words and our actions.

We have to. We have to reflect God's standard in everything. Yes, I'm against homosexuality, but I'm also against lying and cheating.

We often stand on the standard of the sin, but the attitude and the actions and the words that we use end up outside the lines. Let's take a moment to look at how Jesus deals with sinners. I had Proverbs 6. It talks about seven things that he hates.

Prideful people. By the way, lying is mentioned twice. But let's look at how Jesus dealt with sinners.

Remember the story of the woman caught in adultery? Remember that story, John chapter 8? Give you the context. You know the story. I don't have to tell you, but I'm going to anyway.

The scribes and Pharisees have trapped a woman, most likely, and they have taken her right out of the bed, down the streets, and forced her into the middle of the courtyard of the temple where Jesus was teaching. I can imagine that here's this woman standing in the middle of them with just a sheet covering her body. She's caught in the act.

The scribes and Pharisees want Jesus to say to stone her so that he looks bad. And if he says not to stone her, then he still looks bad, because then he's going against what God says in Leviticus. And Jesus, you know the story.

Jesus did not respond to them. He knelt down and he began to draw in the sand. We have no idea what he might have written or drawn.

And then he stood up and looked at them and said, you who are without sin, let you cast the first stone at her. And then he sat back down and drew again. One by one, from the youngest to the oldest, the rocks began to hit the ground.

They turned and they walked away. There she is, caught, an adulteress. I'm sure not the first time that she had done this, caught in adultery.

And Jesus looks up at her. Look at verse 10, the power of verse 10. And when Jesus had raised himself up, all of this time he had stooped for her.

Then he raises himself up and he saw no one but the woman. And he said to her, woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you? And she said, no, Lord. And Jesus said to her, neither do I condemn you.

Now go and sin no more. Before you take off on some rant that I'm taking it easy, let me ask you a question. Was the woman's sin outside the lines? It was.

Did Jesus, in his actions or in his words, approve the sin of the woman? Not for one second did he ever approve the sin of the woman. But he never condemned her for her sin, did he? Do you know why he didn't condemn her? Look at John chapter 3, verses 16 to 21. For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

If you're here today without Jesus, there's an answer for you. And it's right here. That whoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

For God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved. Is our focus condemnation or salvation? Where should our focus be? Within the standard of God, where should our focus be? Our focus should not be on condemnation, but salvation. He who believes in him is already... I'm sorry, I'm sorry.

He who believes in him is not condemned, but he who does not believe in him is condemned already. He didn't have to condemn her because her actions and her lack of belief had condemned her already. Because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten of the son.

And this is the condemnation that the light has come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come into the light. Lest his deeds should be exposed.

But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen and that they may be... that they have been done in God in the lines. Tell you a quick story, personal story. A couple of years ago, I met a homosexual man.

First time I've had an opportunity to build a relationship with somebody that was a homosexual. In walking and working with him over a period of time, I gained his respect. And one day I sat down at his kitchen table, and I said, can I talk to you about homosexuality as a Christian? And he said, yes.

I asked him what he thought led him to this life because he is one of those that lived a life, married to a woman and had three kids, and at some point in his life, discovered at least that he thought that he was living a lie. Left his wife and became a practicing homosexual. He says it went back to when he was six, the abuse that his uncle perpetrated on him.

Did you know that we sat and had a wonderful conversation about the grace of Jesus? That I never once had to look at him and say nasty, hard, bad things, but we talked about the grace of Jesus. If we are operating within the standard of God, is the adulterer and the homosexual welcome among us so that they can see and experience and know the grace of Jesus. Dennis didn't get saved.

I don't know if he ever will. But I know that he left with a message that Jesus died to save him. Loving what is right.

Doing what is right because it is right. That's what we ought to be known for. Loving what is right and doing what is right because it is right.

And in order to do this, in order to love what is right and do what is right because it is right, in order to do that, we must dwell on the whole of what is right. Not just on the piece and the parts of what is right, but on the whole of what is right. We are to think and dwell on all that is right.

Now we could take and replace homosexuality with just about any other sin that you want to. Some of those we could replace with things that would teach us that just like the homosexual, we are operating outside of the lines, the standard of God. I'm talking about for those of us in this room right now.

I told you I was probably going to get in trouble. Do you want to operate by the standard of God? Then may we dwell on the whole standard. The whole standard of God.

And not just on the parts we like. Are you loving what is right? Are you doing what is right? Are you dwelling on what is right? Let's pray. Father, if we are ever to reach a world that has condemned itself already because it does not believe, and because it flees from the darkness, if we are ever to reach that world, then I believe that we have to operate with the ministry standard of Jesus.

Help us God, as your children, as your people, to understand, to discover, to know, and live in the standard. Oh Lord, we know that it is found in your word. I pray that our minds would dwell there.

Help us Lord to dwell. I'm sorry the daily bread is not enough. We need the word of God to permeate our being.

The truth of God to permeate who we are. I pray God that you would help us to do that. To be active in doing that.

I pray for those who are lost today that have never come to Christ. I pray that you would bring them to yourself. I pray Father that you would help us to look at those who are around us that are outside the standard of God and may we treat them as Jesus would.

I pray that we would have a ministry of grace. Let's not say a ministry of acceptance, a ministry of grace. Father, I pray that we would do that so that your kingdom is honored and grown because people are attracted to you.

Oh Lord, we trust you to do this and thank you for it. In Jesus' holy name we pray, amen. If our worship team would come.

Oh, where's my wife? She's coming, okay.

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