

Gospel Meetings - Part 2

by Paul Washer

The church today is plagued by deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, which are rooted in ignorance of God's truth, and the only way to stand against these forces is by constantly nourishing ourselves in God's word and sound doctrine.

Duration: 1:17:56

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Romans 1:16

Topics: "Gospel"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker addresses the issue of gospel reductionism, where the true message of the gospel is simplified to a set of steps or laws. He emphasizes the importance of understanding the New Covenant and the transformative power of the Holy Spirit in the life of believers. The speaker encourages the audience to prioritize knowing God through His word and spending time in His presence. He also highlights the need for believers to be conformed to the image of Christ and live according to the truth of the Bible, rather than seeking worldly success or temporary crowns.

Transcript

I have to agree with Randall that it was a wonderful time today and sitting there and have such appreciation for your pastor and then heard your pastor speak so much about the good doctor and my ears had heard has have heard of him but now my eyes have beheld him and had many, many questions that I wanted to ask him. I was not disappointed although not all my questions were answered. I guess it will take time for that.

Just have such a great need. I have such a great need. I just love being around men who have forgotten more about God than I'll probably ever know.

And they have been in my life such a great blessing. We are all so feeble and we are also weak and there is so little that we do know. We are in such need of grace, always in need of great, great grace.

Well, this morning, the beginning, we started out in Romans 116. We spoke about something that I call the gospel reductionism, which we've reduced the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ down to four spiritual laws or five things God wants you to know with a prayer at the end. And if someone goes through all those evangelical hoops, we declare them to be saved when in fact most of them are not.

And then in the morning service afterwards, spoke out of Jeremiah and the New Covenant and the great things that God would do, has done and is doing through the Messiah who died and rose again for the church. The great change that is brought about by the spirit of God in the life of every true believer. We went on to define the church as something more than a brick building with a finely manicured lawn.

That most of what is called the church today, in fact, is not the church at all. The church is made up of people who are truly born again by the spirit of God, who have embraced the gospel and are embraced by it. Now, this evening, I want to go to a passage.

And actually, last night I taught on this, but I feel like I rather need to do it again. And I want us to go to First Timothy, chapter four, and I'm going to read the entire chapter. Now, some of you upon hearing this will think that I'm preaching to ministers.

Some of you will think, well, I'm preaching to men or those in authority, whether it's in the church or in their home. But in fact, I'm preaching to absolutely everyone here, men, women, children, the oldest, the youngest, the most mature, the most immature. It's an admonition for these times, for these times.

Let's read the chapter in its entirety, First Timothy, chapter four. But the spirit explicitly says that in latter times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience, as with a branding iron. Men who forbid marriage and advocate abstaining from foods which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth for everything created by God is good and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with gratitude for is sanctified by means of the word of God and prayer and pointing out these things to the brethren.

You will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, constantly nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine which you have been following, but have nothing to do with worldly fables fit only for old women. On the other hand, discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness, for bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come. It is a trustworthy statement deserving full acceptance for it is for this we labor and strive because we have fixed our hope on the living God, who is the savior of all men, especially of believers, prescribe and teach these things.

Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but rather in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity. Show yourself an example of those who believe until I come. Give attention to the public reading of scripture, to exhortation and teaching.

Do not neglect the spiritual gift within you, which was bestowed on you through prophetic utterance, with the laying on of hands by the presbytery, take pains with these things, be absorbed in them so that your progress will be evident to all pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching, preserving these things, for as you do, you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you. Let's go to the Lord in prayer, Father, I come before you in the name of your son. How many times, father, have I done this? Come before you.

In that name, and it never fails to bring me right into your presence where angels fear to tread. What a great name. What a great name.

Oh, I worship his name worthy of all glory and honor. It is a trustworthy statement deserving full acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all worthy is the lamb. What a powerful work of salvation.

You have done, oh, God. What could not be achieved by men or armies of men? Are countless priests. You have done with your own right hand, your son, Jesus Christ.

Lord, I ask you to help us. You have been our helper in times past and not one of all the good words that you have spoken has ever failed. We come to you, Lord, not in our own virtue and not our own merit, but pointing to Christ seated at your right hand.

And we ask good things for your people. Oh, truth, the power of the Holy Spirit. Not in words of eloquence or human wisdom.

Father, just how long has it been, oh, God? How many times have I prayed? How many times have I sought you and called upon your name? Oh, never once. Never once. Never once.

Since I met your son, have you closed the door? Oh, God, I am reminded of your faithfulness. You are a good God and you are mighty to save. And it is a pleasure for one day in your courts is better than thousands elsewhere.

I love you, Lord, and I lift my voice to worship the. Take joy, my king, and what you hear. May it be a sweet, sweet sound.

Thank you so much for everything you've done. Father, thank you so much. Jesus name.

Amen. It is good to have a father. It is so good to have a father, a father like ours.

Maybe we should just stop this thing and pray or something. It is so good. Amen.

You know. Before we get started, God has done so much in my life. I've had the opportunity to preach so many places around the world and see so many evidences of his good grace to me.

And. But I could assure you that it would only take. An hour or two being with me to know.

That I would be a tremendous disappointment to you. I want young men to know something that's so important when I used to when I was younger, seems like a long time ago, I'm not that old, but I have a lot of miles. I used to look at men that were preaching and I would think, oh, you know, they've reached some spiritual level in their life.

And because of that spiritual level that they have reached, therefore, God uses them in a mighty way. No, that's not what it is at all. And we are called to be faithful in what we can be faithful in.

But there's no such thing as a great man of God. There are only pitiful, tiny, weak, faithless men of a great and a merciful God. And it is not unto us to grow in power or wisdom or all these things as much as it is to be empty.

That he might fill us, that he might use us. He is such a good God. And all these years I have been such.

A rather dull and stumbling servant. Take heart in that. God, as I said this morning, is known to choose the runt of the litter.

I told someone a long time ago, the only thing I ever qualified for was getting saved. And then qualified for being called. Not because of talent or character or courage, but being called because, brother, not many of you called were noble or wise.

But God chooses the base, the weak, the things that are not to confound the things that are. He is such a good God. And if you truly walk with him at the end of your years, you will not boast in human strength or elegance.

But you will lean on your staff, broken and weak, and raise your hands to the one who saved you by his own virtue and merit. What we have before us, First Timothy, chapter four. And I want to address some issues here that are very, very important and they're just burning in my heart.

And first of all, starting in verse one, he says, but the spirit explicitly says that in latter times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons. Now, the latter times did not begin with some strange outpouring of the Holy Spirit in America this last century. The latter times began with the death, resurrection and ascension of the Messiah.

And to have heresy and false teaching and deceitful spirits and doctrines of demon is not something new to our generation, but it is something that has plagued the church ever since there's been a church. There has always been spiritual warfare. But today I noticed something quite unusual in the false teaching and false ideas of men who ought to be proclaiming the word of God.

We have turned this idea of spiritual warfare into a mystic affair, something on the level of Hollywood. People talking about the devil did this and the devil did this and the need for deliverance here and deliverance there and all these things. But notice deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons.

Deceit has to do with lying. Doctrine has to do with the twisting of truth when it is doctrine of demons. You do not have to be watching movies or things of horror stories.

You do not have to be watching these TV evangelists do all their nonsense and their supposed casting out demons and so on and so forth. You don't have to worry about your refrigerator becoming demon possessed. What you have to worry about is this.

There is a devil and his chief armament in destroying life is the lie. Lying, false teaching, false doctrine and not just false teaching and false doctrine, but also simply ignorance. Wherever there is ignorance of God's law, ignorance of God's truth, there is a door opened up for lies.

For lies. We live in this so-called postmodern age. We live bombarded by lying, bombarded by half-truths and falsehoods and every manner of thing.

And that is the one thing that you need to understand as a Christian. The battle in the Christian life begins in the mind. With the knowledge of truth and knowing truth, being able to establish your life, your thought life, your daily activity, your responses in relationship, to be able to base everything that you are and everything that you do upon what you know about God and God's will.

But. Today in America, especially America, there is a rampant ignorance. Of simply.

The attributes of God. There is a horrid ignorance of the will of God, the activity of God, how God works in the life of a man. And most of the noise and the clutter and the glitter and all that we see today in modern

day so-called church is a weak substitute for the one thing we most desperately need, which is true doctrine to build our lives upon truth so that we will not be carried away by every wind and every lie.

That is our great need. And now when we talk about truth, let me say this. It's not just truth with regard to things such as the Trinity.

Even though that is absolutely important, it is not just truth with regard to things such as soteriology or the doctrine of salvation, it is truth with regard to every aspect of our life, because the Bible, the Scriptures speak to everything in the human life. But we don't believe that anymore. The Bible speaks about how you're to maintain relationships, what type of relationship you're supposed to have.

The Bible speaks about what you're to watch, what you're to hear. The Bible speaks about how you're supposed to sit and stand. The Bible speaks about what clothes you're supposed to wear.

One of the things I most respect about the Puritans, even though I do not agree with the Puritans in absolutely everything, they had a passionate desire to submit every aspect of their life to the Lordship of Jesus Christ through the written word, through obedience to the written word. We take so much for granted. Looking at most Christians, you would have to say that at least eighty five to ninety percent of their life was simply doing what's right in their own eyes.

Are determining how they should walk, how they should talk, how they should dress, how they should have relationships and so on and so forth, just by looking at other Christians who are as ignorant as they are. How does the devil most work in this world? Through the ignorance of God's people, through the ignorance of God's people. What does the scripture say? My people perish for a lack of knowledge.

Where there is no vision. The people perish. Now, I know that that text is often used by pastors who have just gone into a building program.

You know, they'll they'll get in this building program or they'll get this new idea about the direction the church ought to go in. And they say where there is no vision, the people perish. That's not what that text means at all.

What it's basically saying is where there is no revelation of God's law, where there is no revelation of God's will, where there is no knowledge of who God is and what he requires of thee, the people perish. They perish. Now, we find something here very, very important.

Paul warns Timothy and all of us through this letter that we will constantly be having to deal with deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons that will plague the church throughout all of her years and will fight and war against the believer through all of his or hers. Paul tells us this will be a great problem, a battle of the mind, a battle of knowledge, a battle between light and dark truth and lies. But he doesn't leave Timothy there and he doesn't leave us there either.

He not only speaks of the problem, but the Apostle Paul speaks of the solution. And I'm going to submit to you today that the reason why we're all in such a state that we're in. Often weak and limping and worldly and broken, and that sometimes there's not a sound part upon us from our head to our toe, it's because we have not listened the congregation nor the leadership of congregations.

We have not listened to the admonition of Paul to Timothy. What are we supposed to do when we see? All this spiritual warfare, all this calamity, how can we stand against these gates of hell? Well, let's look. After

he tells us about this, he describes how Timothy should be.

We go to verse six, he says, in pointing out these things to the brethren, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus. Now he's going to describe him constantly nourished on the words of faith and of the sound doctrine which you have been following. Now, let's just stop here right now.

Would you describe your life as constantly nourished on the words of the faith? Is that how you would describe your life? Now, I'm not just talking to the preacher, the pastor, the evangelist, the person in the ministry. I'm not just talking about the head of the household. I'm talking about everyone who identifies themselves with the person of Christ and his salvation.

Would you identify yourself, describe yourself as someone who was literally nourished, constantly nourished on the words of the faith? Would you say that? Most would have to say no. Paul is telling Timothy, Timothy, there is going to be an onslaught of warfare. This is a difficult thing.

The Christian life is a difficult uphill battle, fighting all the way. Timothy, here's the first thing you've got to put in mind. You must be constantly nourished by the words of the faith.

I read a statistic years ago that said the average minister in America spends less than 15 minutes a day in the Word of God. Now, what does that mean for the rest of the congregation? Some of you will have to admit you haven't been in the Word of God in a long time. Some of you may have to admit that the only time you're ever in the Word of God is Sunday and Wednesday.

And yet, in order to live this Christian life, we must be people who are constantly nourished in the words of faith, the words of the faith. Now, I want you to think about something for a moment. Let's say that all of us decide that we have a lot to do in the month of May.

So it's the last days of April and we decide that we just have a lot to do and we don't have time to eat. We simply don't have time to eat all the month of May. So this is what we're going to do.

The first and second and third day of May, we're going to eat 24 hours a day for three days. That's all we're going to do. We're just going to eat and eat and eat and eat and eat so that we do not have to eat the rest of the month so that we can give ourselves to the labors and the tasks that we must accomplish.

Now, you don't have to be a doctor or a scientist to know something that is not going to work. Even if you eat three days in a row, 24 hours a day by about, I don't know, nine o'clock the fourth day, you're going to be hungry again. Why? Because that's not the way it works.

You don't eat for three days so that you don't have to eat the rest of the month. You don't drink a whole bunch of water like a camel for three days so that you don't have to drink water the rest of the month. You realize that you must eat every day and not just once a day, periodically through the day.

And you must drink water every day, not just once a day, but periodically through the entire day. You must be constantly nourishing yourself or you will not be healthy. You will not grow constantly nourishing yourself.

Do you do that? Do you do that? We have a world filled of ministers who, as the Japanese man who came over to this country once said, When I look at a Buddhist priest in my own country and I see his life of meditation and the study of his holy books and how he contemplates and how he strives and disciplines

his life for spirituality, I think, holy man. When I come to the United States and see an evangelical pastor, I think businessman, administrator. You see, what we have done, starting with the minister, is we have turned in our mantle of the prophet and put on a business jacket.

And so many churches today are run by administrators, movers and shakers and planners and strategists and little boys with laptop computers. But not men who constantly nourish themselves in the word of God and constantly dwell in the presence of God in prayer. And that filters down through the entire congregation.

The word of God is the only thing we have. You cannot lead your family, sir. You cannot do it apart from being constantly nourished on the words of the faith.

You cannot. You cannot be godly. You cannot be an instrument of God.

You cannot grow. It is an absolute essential. But it is the very thing that we do not do or we recognize that we do not do it.

And so we get all psyched up about what we're going to do. And we end up saying, well, today I'm going to study 37 chapters. Today I'm going to pray four hours.

You totally wear yourself out and then don't do it again for several weeks. You're anemic and weak and do not understand the ways of God. And in some ways, there's not a there's not a healthy part of you from your head to your toe.

So many Christians struggle and suffer in so many areas of their life because of ignorance of God's word, direct disobedience to God's will. And it seems as though they're not even aware of it. The word of God is all we have.

It's all we have. And how can we stand in such a defiled culture? How can we stand with so many wrong ideas and wrong thoughts bombarding us all the time? It is only by constantly nourishing ourselves, being nourished in the word of God. And the sound doctrine.

Which we have been following. My dear friend. I could stop right now and simply ask you, what kind of relationship do you have with the word of God? What kind of relationship? Last week, I was at a conference preaching and I had many, many interviews with several young men.

And they all came in, many of them brand new converts, some of them converts, two years, three years. And every one of them, bless their heart, they want to change the world. They've got they have got ideas of ministry and they want to do this and they want to do that.

And they want to do so many things. And I look at them and I just say, stop. You don't even know God.

You're saved, yes, but you're a novice. First Timothy, chapter three. And not a new convert.

You don't know the word. How long do you tarry every day in the scripture? Is it a half an hour? Is it an hour? Is it two? Is it three? Is it four? How many hours a day do you tarry in prayer? Do you really know him? Have you been schooled in his presence? Everyone wants to jump into the ministry because everyone wants to do something. The problem is it's not about doing something.

It's about being something conformed to the image of Christ and someone who lives in the presence of God. Like I said, we've traded in the word of God and the power of the Holy Spirit for 10 steps to have your best life now. We are a spiritual people.

We live based on truth. And if our lives are not governed by that truth, we cannot stand. And if you are not a man or a woman or a young believer who has recognized the importance of literally being saturated in the word of God, reading this thing from Genesis to Revelation, pondering it, meditating on it, memorizing it, you cannot stand.

You cannot. Now, so first of all, he says what? To be able to stand in these evil times, we should be constantly nourished. Constantly nourished on the words of the faith.

The Bible should literally be connected to your hand. Like the warrior who swung the sword with such strength and so long that it stuck to his hand. So the word of God ought to be stuck to your hand.

And all of you young people out there with your MP3s and your CDs and your all these other things that you have, bless God, take advantage of it. When you can't be reading the word, you've got to go somewhere, put that MP3 thing in your head and get you the scriptures and just listen to scripture. Listen to scripture.

Listen, not Christian music a little bit. If it's older than 100 years, you can listen to it. But if you really want to grow the scripture, the scripture, I'm on a plane, I've been studying the word, I know, OK, I'm going to get off the plane.

They just say, unfasten your seatbelts. Everybody jumps up really quick so that they can stand there for half an hour and not move. I get my MP3 player out.

My wife showed me how to use it. Stick it in my ears. Book of James.

I go through the entire book of James before anyone gets off that plane. Yes, taking every moment of our life, designing it for what? For this one thing that we most desperately need, and that is the knowledge of God through the word of God. So he says, Timothy, here's what you do.

You be constantly nourished, constantly. And then he goes on and he says something else. Verse seven, he says, but have nothing to do with worldly fables fit only for old women.

Have nothing to do with worldly fables. I want you to know that this world is full of worldly fables. There are so many worldly fables governing almost everyone's lives and worldly fables that have also terribly influenced even the dedicated believer.

Our mindsets have been so engulfed by what we think is right. But we've never proved it with the Scripture. And we do not know enough Scripture in order to determine what a worldly fable is so as to even reject it.

Let me tell you about one of the most important things, if you're going to think about godly living and a godly thought life. First of all, before you can bring in the word of God and begin to train your mind in the things of God, you've got to have nothing to do with the things that contaminate your mind. You read the Scripture for three hours and then turn on the television set and see one image.

One sensual, extravagant image, and you can pretty much count on the fact you're going to know your three hours. You see, one of the things that you've got to realize, if in its content, if I have a jar that is halfway filled with raw sewage and it stays there, it doesn't matter how much clean water I pump in, all the clean water that gets pumped in is going to turn dirty and filthy, that you cannot drink it. So many people are studying Scripture, but they have not learned, first of all, mortification of sin and the need to separate from everything that is a worldly fable and that contaminates the heart and the mind and the spirit.

We've got to learn that we are living behind enemy lines. This is a fallen, wicked place. Someone says to me, Brother Paul, let's go to the mall.

No. Why? I can't. Why? I want to preach with the power of God on my life.

I don't go to places like that because unless I'm going to stick my head in a bucket, I'm going to be bombarded with something. Yes, I live in a real world. Yes, I have to get out.

But everything I can avoid, I must avoid. It is one thing to live in this world and have to fight against everything that's in it. It's another thing to pump it into your home, to pump it into your head.

Several years ago, I was really struggling with something, struggling with depression, and Leonard Ravenhill sent me a track. And I don't agree with everything in the track, but there was one thing that it said, and it was this others can, you cannot. And what it was basically saying is if you want God on your life, if you want to be an instrument of God, if you want to see His power and His blessing, then what many other people think they can do, even Christians, you cannot do.

You must separate yourself as much as possible from everything in your life that's going to grieve the Holy Spirit. You must. If your right eye offend thee, pluck it out.

If your right hand offend thee, cut it off. Reject worldly fables. So many people are trying to battle sins when they ought to be running from them, avoiding them.

So many young people battling with youthful lust when it never says to battle with youthful lust, it says to run from it. Run from it. Young men will come to me quite often and say, Brother Paul, I'm really struggling in my thought life.

Well, tell me where your eyes are going and I'll tell you about your thought life. So it is not just nourishing our lives on the Word of God. We've got as much as we can to reject everything that is a lie.

Everything that's a lie. This world is a world of media. It's a world of entertainment.

We are constantly being bombarded by things that are not true. And don't think for a moment that you're immune to it. You are not.

And so set up a wall against it. Avoid it. Run from it.

Take a survey of your life and determine the things that are not of God and cut them out. Determine the things, those open doors where things are entering in that corrupt you and make you vile and cause you not to be clean. Cut them off with an exaggeration.

If you have to cut them off, even though you have to go to an extreme, do whatever you have to do to avoid. Worldly fables, because they're fit for nothing. Except to destroy your life, you have no idea, and

neither do I, how influenced you are by your culture.

Many of you, your marriages struggle unbelievably. Because your whole idea of what it's supposed to be like to be married to a woman is based on what you've seen from Hollywood. And not based upon Scripture, your whole idea of love, your whole idea of companionship.

Many of you raise your children according to what neighbors do. There's very little difference between you and a worldly family. Let's just admit it.

There's healing, if we will. If I were to hand out a paper right now and say, OK, give each one of you a paper. We're going to take a test, which might be good after preaching.

OK, here's the first test. Show me the major passages in Scripture and explain them to me that deal with how a husband is supposed to live before the Lord in regard to his wife. Now, tell me what a father is supposed to do and how he's supposed to train his children in godly discipline, the admonition of the Lord, according to Scripture.

According to Scripture, write out for me with verses, please, what the Bible says about what should enter into your mind through your eyes and what should not enter in. Write out for me for a moment what the Bible says about when an elder. A man of age, a woman of age comes into your presence, young person, what are you supposed to do? Write out for me what the Bible says about clothing.

Write out for me what the Bible says about how you're supposed to spend your money or your retirement. Most people wanting to go south or north or somewhere east or west, collect seashells or something. Put her around on a golf course.

What does the Bible say about retirement? It says this, that if you're working and you're employed, you're the Lord's freeman. But if you can free yourself, if you're no longer employed, you're the Lord's bondman and you're supposed to serve him. I mean, begin to think, if you were to take your life and break it down in compartments, how much of those compartments are actually governed by what God has said in His Word? Almost nothing.

We live according to what's right in our own eyes and we become contaminated with the very things that God tells us to avoid because we don't know what we're supposed to avoid. And it all comes back to this, my people perish for a lack of knowledge. Now, look what it says in verse seven.

He says, on the other hand, discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness. Look at this. What is he saying? This is so very important.

Discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness. Most of us in our ideas of growth and spirituality have been so affected by Keswick teaching. Now, you probably don't even know what that is, but we have been so affected by Keswick teaching.

It's this teaching of, well, just let go and let God. If you're going to change, God's going to do it. That is not New Testament teaching.

The New Testament teaches that it is God who is working in you and He's going to accomplish what He is working in you. And that same God who is working in you to accomplish what He wants to accomplish also commands you to work out your salvation with fear and trembling. To discipline yourself for the purpose of

godliness.

Now, here we're coming to the main treasure of this. And what is that? How do we stem the tide of all this spiritual warfare, all this ungodliness, all this horrible battle that the Christian is in? How do we do it? What is the one key? Discipline yourself for godliness. You don't need to know 10 steps how to do this or that.

You don't need six ways to fix your marriage. Your one problem is this lack of godliness. Because the godly man, the godly woman, the godly youth will overcome and will stand on that day of trial.

What is the greatest need in our life? Well, what did Christ say? What did God say in the book of Romans? He actually predestined us. He predetermined it's His greatest good for us to be conformed to the image of Christ. Why are we here on this earth? To be conformed to the image of Christ in sanctification.

Another way of saying that, to be godly. And the greatest need in the minister's life, the greatest need in the father's life, the greatest need in the mother's life, in the layman's life, in the deacon's life is godliness. And he tells Timothy, in the midst of this terrible warfare, here's what you must do.

Arrange everything in your life for one great purpose, to be godly. Do you do that? Is your entire life, your schedule and everything else, is it organized around one thing? To become more godly. If you only knew the impact of those words, do you realize what I'm saying? Your chest should cave in.

Oh, this world is so bad, we say. This world is so difficult. This world is no friend to the Christian.

The devil is on the prowl. This and that and everything else. The world gets more wicked every day.

The Bible tells us, don't worry about that. The Bible says, you concentrate on one thing, discipline. Structure your entire life for the purpose of becoming more godly.

For the purpose of becoming more and more like Christ Jesus, that's your task. I really like what God has done to a lot of our seminaries. And I've sent so many young men to seminaries, that some of these seminaries ought to be paying me a commission.

Really. But even the men who are leaders of those seminaries realize that a seminary itself has inherent weaknesses. A seminary is basically designed, and about the only thing it really can do, is to give you the tools necessary to do proper hermeneutics, to do proper study of Scripture, to know about church history, and the things you need to know to know where you're at, the things you need to know in order to properly interpret Scripture.

The best of seminaries, that's about the best they can do, and that's a good thing. But I want you to look at something. In church life, would you say that everything ordered around church life has as its great purpose making the members godly? Would you say that fathers and mothers, by and large, when they're raising their children, their main purpose is to make them godly? My wife, she's an unbelievable person.

Because sometimes we homeschool, and sometimes I get worried, well, you know, is he getting the mathematics he needs? You know, should we teach him Latin? Where should we go from here? And all these things, and sometimes my wife just says, Paul, Paul, settle down. We're homeschooling. And we're going to do a good job with the education.

But the purpose of homeschooling is not education. The purpose of homeschooling is that this young man be godly. That he be a devout follower of Jesus Christ, because He can be the most educated man on the

face of the earth and split hell wide open.

Our purpose for homeschooling is to discipline him for the purpose of godliness. But families don't do that, by and large. Men don't do that.

They're more worried about taking their son to a baseball game, or a football game, or a soccer game, and run their children all over the country, doing every kind of hobby in the world, and investing almost no time whatsoever in making that child godly. And then we wonder what happened. Our lives are to be structured around making ourselves godly.

Our churches are to be structured around the purpose of growing in godliness. Most ministers, what are they doing? They're running around. They're strategizing.

They're learning new church growth techniques. They're putting Starbucks in their church. The church just looks like a Six Flags Over Jesus.

Why? Why? Why? Because we're not obeying Paul. What is the minister's great need? Godliness. That the man would sit there in the Word of God when everyone else is sleeping in the wee hours of the morning through the day, that he would sit there in the Word of God being constantly nourished, growing, becoming more and more godly.

Again, we have traded our mantle of a prophet for the jacket of a businessman. Discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness. But get back to seminaries for a moment.

Before they go to seminary, no one's really convincing them that the chief aim of their life is to be godly. When they go to seminary, they're learning all the other things, but there's really not this great emphasis on, look, man, our greatest purpose is to teach you how to be godly. When he gets into the ministry, he has no time to think about disciplining himself for the purpose of godliness.

But that's the very thing that he needs. I believe that you men especially, not just you young men thinking about ministry, but you men, you need to sit down and you need to order your day around one thing. You need to order your day around the activities that Scripture puts before you in order to make you godly.

You need to begin to reject worldly fables. You need to take that television set and run a sledgehammer through it. You need to quit polluting your mind.

And then you need to give yourself to the study of Scripture and prayer and godly fellowship with other men for the purpose of being able to do what you were called to do, which is first of all, if you are married, to be a godly husband. And second, if you have children, to be a godly father. And thirdly, to be a godly, useful servant in the context of a local church that you can see.

Godliness, that is the purpose. Now, he goes on and he says, on the other hand, discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness. For bodily discipline, in verse 8, is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.

Bodily discipline is of little profit. It is. It is profitable.

It is a good thing to walk and to run and to work. It is a good thing to exercise. That is a good thing.

But no matter how much you exercise, how much you lift weights, how many times you go to the gym, you're not going to win that battle. Because it's profitable only for this life. And only for a few short years of youth during this life.

Church, we give ourselves to chasing down so many things that do not matter. A fool in the Bible is not an ignorant man. A fool in the Bible is not someone who has no intellect or inability to learn.

A fool is someone who has the truth put right before them, and yet they do not obey it. Don't you realize this world and everything in it is passing away and the only one who remains is the man who does the will of God? Don't you realize? Yes, you're young right now. In one day you'll be older than me.

Don't you realize the vanity of that? That this life is passing. And you give so much of your time to be a success in so many things of this world and to gather so many things in this world, but don't you realize this world is passing away and an eternity is about to dawn. You say, Brother Paul, do you believe Christ is coming quickly? Well, I believe He's coming quickly.

It just depends on how you define quickly. You say, Brother Paul, do you think He's coming in 10 years, 50 years? I say, it really doesn't matter because everyone in this room is going to be dead inside of 75 years. So whether He comes here or you go there, it doesn't matter, does it? The world is passing away.

Some of you, your youth. In your youth there is ignorance and there is foolishness bound up in your heart, and you cannot understand eternal things. And you look straight at the truth and you can't even recognize it.

You don't know that this is not a game. It's not a religion. If it is, I've wasted my life.

This is about foundational truths of reality. There is a God. He made you.

You're responsible before Him. He sent His Son to die for you. You will be judged by that same Son, not only with regard to your acceptance of Him, but His acceptance of you.

And if you are a Christian, your mind ought to be enlightened to the fact that homes and clothing and money and fame and leisure and all these things that we chase after, notoriety and comfort and so on and so forth, it will all be gone in the twinkling of an eye. Francis Schaeffer, how then shall we live? How shall we live? How shall we live? Men who will train and train and train and train so that they can run a hundred meters one time in the Olympics and have nothing more to do to obtain a crown that is corruptible. But we are not like those who walk in the night, in the darkness.

The Bible says that God has given us understanding. We are not like those who sleep. We should know better.

We should learn. We should have our eye on eternity. We should live according to that.

Yesterday I was nine. Today I'm 45. Tomorrow I'll be gone.

Life goes that fast. But if we give ourselves to disciplining ourselves... You know, we're always worried about what kind of grades are our children going to get in high school? And then where are they going to go to college? And what kind of job are they going to get? And so on and so forth. Even though some of those things are important, they are outshined by one great thing.

And what is that? How will they stand before God on that final day? What have they done with their life? Bodily discipline, yes. Discipline for things of this world, yes, it can be important. But it is not the most important thing.

I was sharing yesterday that while I was on the plane, I was memorizing Scripture. And it's really difficult. I am not good at memorizing Scripture.

But it doesn't say in Scripture that you don't have to memorize Scripture if you're not any good at memorizing Scripture. And so I'm memorizing Scripture and I got my Bible there on that little thing that comes out behind the chair. And I'm doing like this and I'm just going, Oh God, what is that word? Then I looked over and the lady seated beside me is going, She sees a Bible.

She sees a guy with his face all scrunched up, if that's a word. And she thinks, fanatic. But if I had been a businessman with a laptop and statistics on my computer and a book of how to make more money or more profit for my company, she would have thought, dedicated.

Who is the fanatic? Who is ludicrous? Oh, my dear friend, you will stand before Him. You will give an account. You must keep that in your mind that bodily discipline has some profit to it, but only a little.

But godliness is profitable for all things since it holds promise for this life and for the life to come. The Christian ought to have two days always before them. The day when they stand before God and the day when Christ hung before men.

The great motivation of our life. This is not our world. This is not our home.

We do not get our reward here. And you've got to believe that or your life will be lost. Do you know, just for a moment, do you know how difficult it is to be a real preacher? Do you have any idea to look out at a congregation night after night, state after state, country after country, knowing that there are men listening to your voice who will rot in hell? Knowing that there are others who will stand before Christ and be judged? Knowing that the great majority are not listening? But you, listen! A day is coming and you'll stand before Him.

As the old Puritan said, I shall preach as a dying man to dying men and I shall preach as though I shall never preach again. To warn you, it is not about getting your best life now. It is not.

That's a lie. The whole mess of it is. It's about being judged by God.

It's about serving Him. It's about living in the fear of the Lord and the joy of the Lord. Swift He is coming.

And you will know His arm. You will know it if you have not served Him. And then he says this.

It is a trustworthy statement deserving of full acceptance. Verse 10. For it is for this we labor and strive because we have fixed our hope on the living God.

Now I want you to think about this. Immediately, when an American reads this passage and he hears Paul say, for this, for it is for this we labor and strive, they're automatically thinking Paul now is talking about his ministry. Well, he did labor and strive in his ministry and I am sure that's part of what he's saying.

But don't forget the context. He's laboring and striving for godliness. He's disciplining himself for godliness.

So many of you young men want to get in the ministry and you want to labor and you want to strive. But listen to me. It is not so much about what you do.

It is first and foremost about who you are. About becoming a man of God. Becoming a man who knows Scripture.

John the Baptist, 30 years of preparation in a desert for six months of ministry. Jesus, 30 years in every kind of experience, in isolation, unknown for three years of ministry. But young men get saved and they think they're going to start a ministry.

Whatever happened to going out in the desert and tarrying with God and being there with Him so that His seal is upon you? So that when people look you in the eye, they know they are not looking at a boy who is imitating some other sermon that belongs to another man. But a burden is in his heart. The Old Testament idea of oracle carried with it the idea of burden.

Men spoke because they were moved of God. And men spoke because they were burdened. And men spoke because they realized there is a God, there is an eternity, and all will stand before Him on that day.

All will stand before Him. We labor and strive. Do you do that? Do you exert yourself to be godly? Do you discipline yourself to be godly? Remember what the book of Hebrews says that we ought to strive, we ought to pursue holiness because without holiness, no one will see the Lord.

You say, brother Paul, are you talking about a work of salvation? Absolutely not. Salvation is of grace. It's by faith alone.

But what you have to understand is someone who is truly converted will strive after holiness if they are reminded to do so. It is the preacher's purpose to stir you up and remind you of former things and to set you back on the path again. As I've said so many times, people used to tell me, brother Paul, living in the jungle must have been very difficult.

Serving Christ there must have been very difficult. No, it was very, very easy. Because you get up in the morning, you eat a banana or this porridge they make out of bananas.

You go down to the river. You take a bath. You come back.

You go out and preach. Then you go to another place and preach. Then you go to another place and preach.

And then you make it back home in the dark in your canoe hoping you don't run up on the back of an alligator. And then you pull that in there and you collapse in your tent. And then you wake up and you do the same thing over and over.

It's easy. What's difficult is not serving Christ in Peru. What's difficult is when you get on a plane and land in Miami.

There is where it's difficult. Because that clear vision, that clear eye that's looking only to eternity begins to be cloudy and loses its focus and begins to think about things like insurance, houses, cars, and socks, and retirement funds, and all these things that the moth can eat and the rust can rot and thieves can take away. Now, there are essentials in our life and we must do things in order to live in this country.

But you need to be warned not to be carried off by those things. And you need to be warned that you need to follow Christ. And you need to labor and strive for what? For Him.

And for godliness. And for character. And he goes on and he says this.

Verse 12. We're coming to a close. He says, Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but rather in speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity, show yourself an example of those who believe.

Now, in Timothy's case, it was youthfulness. It was youthfulness. It was an obstacle, supposedly in his ministry.

He was a young man. He may have men come up to him and say, I'm not listening to you. You are a young man.

But all of us have obstacles. All of us. And none of those obstacles matter.

The only thing you're supposed to do is this. And what is that? Look what he says. In speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity, show yourself an example of those who believe.

What are you to do? If you're a pastor of a church, what is the greatest need of your church? That you show yourself as an example of those who believe in speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity. Now, here's a problem. When you hear that, you put it all together in one big lump.

Don't. Dissect each one of those words and find out what they mean. What is the greatest thing, Father, husband, and father, that your wife and children need? That in speech, conduct, faith, love, and purity, you show yourself as an example.

Mothers, the same. Everyone else, the same. It's like I was sharing.

I was preaching a message here in Texas several years ago. And a church was really struggling and they needed a pastor. And I preached my first message just to encourage them.

I had no intention of being their pastor. I stepped down. I didn't even get out of the pulpit.

And the pulpit committee came up to me and said, we want you to be our pastor. And I looked at them and I said, with a twinkle in my eye, are you out of your mind? And they said, what do you mean? I said, you don't know if I love my wife. You don't know how I care for my children.

You know nothing about my character. You know nothing about my integrity. You know nothing about everything the Bible commands in 1 Timothy 3 about the requirements of an elder.

You don't know if I have any of those in my life. All you know is I got lucky and preached one message well. It's about character, men.

It's about character. It's about being alone with God in order to become like His Son in character, in speech. Your speech is a dead giveaway.

In conduct. What you do. Not just what you talk about.

A dear friend of mine, someone called him up and said, I need someone to preach a conference on prayer. Do you know anyone? He said, no, I don't. He said, I know people who pray and they don't talk

about it.

And I know people who talk about it and don't pray. So no, I don't have anyone who can teach in your conference. So it's not just about speech.

It's about conduct. And it's about faith. And it's about love.

And it's about purity. And all those things we are to be working on in our lives. He goes on and he says this.

And here's what I want you to see. It's the most important part of this. Verse 15.

He says, take pains with these things. Be absorbed in them so that your progress will be evident to all. Take pains with these things.

I'm going to go back to my inability to memorize Scripture. I struggle with it so much. It is a pain for me to memorize Scripture.

Before the service started, I was going over 1 Timothy 6 again. Verses 1-10. And I was literally contorting in the pastor's office.

He thought I was a spiritual man down on my knees praying to God. And actually, I was trying to cram those verses in that big thick head of mine. It's a pain.

It's not easy. And it's not fun until I get it. It's a pain.

It is a pain to sometimes pray when God wakes you up at 3 in the morning. It is a pain while everyone else is going out doing something sometime to say no, I've been lacking in the Word of God a bit, and I need to get in here for several hours and I need to study. It is a pain to fight against this world.

It is a pain to fight against the flesh. It is a pain. All this whole thing is a pain.

People tell me, Christians in America don't have to suffer. It's just because they're not Christians in America. You suffer more here than you do any place else I've ever been.

Now, the suffering is different. There isn't someone putting a glock to your head. But there is suffering.

It is fighting all this stuff. It's almost an invisible battle. It's like fighting a mist.

A fog that comes upon you and turns you away from the very things that are most important so that you can't see them. It is a pain. We are to take pains.

Let me ask you a question. Do you do that? I hear so many men that say, well, you know, I'm just not given to reading. Well, I'm not either.

I'm given to sitting in a tree stand with my bow. I'm given to eating a steak. I'm given to just go to sleep with a book on my head.

But that's not the point. It's not about what I'm given to. He says take pains with these things.

They're going to cost you. They're going to be difficult. Do them.

And then he says this. In this verse, this part of this verse has literally been used of God to change my life. He said take pains with these things.

Be absorbed in them. Now I want you to think for a moment about paper towels. The ones that they always advertise that absorb everything.

Imagine that on this table right here I were to spill water and it pooled up to be about this size. There's the water. Everyone can see it.

But then I take a paper towel and I lay it over that water and then I pull it back. The water's no longer on the table. You can't see it any longer.

Why? It's been absorbed in the paper towel. There should be a sense in which people are asking, where is he? Where's your husband? Where's Paul? Where is he? I don't see him as much. What's he doing? He's absorbed in these things.

Young men, here's one of the greatest problems. All these young men want to go in the ministry and they're all about group hugs and singing Kumbaya together. That's not the ministry.

Let me share with you something. When I was first called into the ministry, I had a pastor in Austin, Texas. His name was James Weaver.

Just a giant of a man. He was really something. And I went in there.

I was terrified. And I said, Pastor Weaver, God's called me to preach. He was 6'5", 6'6", this wavy gray hair, just a big man.

He turned around and he said, Boy, he could call me that. I didn't have any problem. He said, Boy, can you be alone? And I thought what he was saying was if I preach the truth, I'd be alone.

People would not want to be with me. That's not what he meant. What he meant was this.

Son, I see these boys come and go. They all want to be preachers. They all want to be men of God.

But they can't be alone. They're always with their friends. They're always running with the pack.

Can you separate yourself and be alone with God? Can you dwell with Him when everyone else is playing? Now, this is not just for preachers. This is for fathers and husbands. This is for wives and mothers.

Can you be alone with Him? Can you? In His Word, being absorbed in the things and the disciplines of growing in godliness so that no one sees you any longer because you're absorbed in these things. One of my favorite illustrations about this is a great violinist in Europe is playing his last concert, an old man. And a young man came up to him who was also a violinist just starting out.

And after the man played, the young man walked up to him and said, Sir, I would give my life to play like you. And the old man looked at him and said, I have given my life to play like me. A man who is skillful in what he does will not stand before obscure men.

We are to be, in a sense, those of us who minister, but all of us, we are to be, in a sense, a skilled craftsman. One of my favorite singers in the whole world is Andrea Vocelli. And I love classical music.

And I will watch some of these people play knowing I'm not so much appreciating the song at the moment. I'm not so much appreciating the talent. You know what I'm appreciating? That this person has practiced eight hours a day for the last 20 years of their life to play a violin like that.

And yet when I come to men of God and preachers and pastors and so on and so forth, it's not the same. It's not the same. We are to be absorbed in what really matters.

Now, I don't know you, and you probably think that's pretty good and you hope it stays that way. But I see people. I watch people.

I look at people my age and younger, and they live the most frantic, hurried, almost insane lifestyles. And there's two reasons. They're either chasing the world for themselves or they're chasing the world for their children.

They're absorbed in getting things for themselves or they're absorbed in getting things for their children. Let me give you an example. People come to me for financial counseling a lot.

And usually what I tell them after listening to their story is I say, well, first of all, let's just look at the main problem. And they say, well, what is that? I say, you didn't go to med school. And they say, what do you mean? I say, you want to live like a doctor.

But you didn't go to school to be one. That's your problem. You live beyond your means.

You are so in debt that you must work all the time. And you're so in debt not to eat, not to have clothing, not to have shelter, but to pay for clothing you don't need, to pay for new cars that you don't need, and you've got a mortgage so big that if you were to lose your job, you'd lose everything in a month. And you are a slave, not to God, but to greed and materialism and sensuality and extravagance.

You've literally wore yourself out to buy trinkets. You're absorbed in the work of your Master. The only problem is your Master is a taskmaster.

He's a banker. He's your neighbor. On and on.

Or you're absorbed in the worldly activities of your children. I have seen people literally, literally drop their kid off at school, pick their kid back up, and then it begins. Soccer practice, football practice, baseball practice, baton twirling, pageants, this, that, everything else.

No time for the family. No time for church. No time for God.

Why? Because you're training your children in unrighteousness. And you're going to make them under the same taskmaster that you're under. You're absorbed in the things of the world.

But you're supposed to be absorbed in the things of God. Things that are eternal. Things that truly matter.

You know, sometimes you stand up and preach, like tonight, and you realize there just doesn't seem to be any power whatsoever to preach. There doesn't seem to be any power to communicate. You feel like every word that's come out of your mouth has been a brick.

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