

A Time for Building Up, A Time for Tearing Down

by Steve Gallagher

Transcript

Praise the Lord! It's very comforting when you get up here to bring a message that you're not all that sure about when the Lord really lays the groundwork before you get up here to speak. Pastor Ed didn't know what I was going to speak on and Evan certainly didn't know. But Pastor Ed really kind of laid a sense.

You'll get it when I start speaking. You'll see what I'm talking about because I do have a definite message that I feel the Lord gave me and Evan just shared the title with you. It's hilarious to me.

Wait a minute, he's just brand new here. You can't hear from the Lord like this. This ain't right.

Don't ever do that again. Steal my notes. Stole my thunder.

We're going to be in Galatians 5, but here's the title of my message. It comes from Ecclesiastes 3. There is an appointed time for everything, a time to tear down and a time to build up. Actually, I may change the title of the message.

I don't know. We'll see how you guys act, but I may change it before it's over with. That's my prerogative.

You know, guys, the reality of the life in the kingdom is that God appoints different seasons of your life. He appoints some seasons for tearing down and He appoints some seasons for building up. It's just the way He does it.

But even the tearing down, please understand this, He doesn't do it on a whim or something or other. He's got a definite purpose in mind. He doesn't tear you down because He enjoys hurting you or frustrating you or making life difficult for you.

He does it because He must tear down before He can build up. And we're going to talk about what Evan kindly shared with you here out of Galatians 5, the self-life. Because here in this chapter, the Apostle Paul really lays out this... Well, you know what? I could say it this way.

This describes the daily spiritual battle we all face, but it also describes a lifelong war. You know, and you will win some battles, you'll lose some battles, but if you're allowing God to have His way during the lifetime, your lifetime here on earth, as God is working in you and you're yielding to Him, He will win that war. And that's what's so real to me this morning.

Let's just start off by reading these verses, starting with 19. Now, the deeds of the flesh or the way the flesh... What? The way the flesh behaves? Someone say that? That's pretty good. Manifests itself, the way it acts, the way... Yeah, like that.

The deeds of the flesh are evident and then this horrid list of 15 things. You know what? I'm not even going to read it. It's so disgusting to me.

I'm not even going to read it. We don't need to read it. We know what it's all about.

We've all lived in it. And, you know, you may be able to look at things in this list and say, well, that doesn't describe me and that doesn't describe me, but you know what? Paul is just talking about those kinds of things that come out of the self-life. So don't get hung up on whether or not every single thing describes you.

I promise you, you have a self-life of your own. And it's this kind of nasty stuff that comes forth out of our own natures. Now, I want to just make a couple of passing comments on this couple of verses here.

One is that this list of 15 things is pretty evenly divided between inward things and outward activity. If you look through that list, you'd see what I mean. Some are describing heart issues and some are describing things that we do.

Okay, it's just a passing comment. And the other thing I want to mention, maybe more importantly, is that all of this activity, whether it's mental activity or physical activity, requires energy. And the source of energy is described right here in verse 16, where Paul says, and this is basically a conditional promise.

He says, the lust of the flesh is the source of energy to drive forward the kinds of activities and the kinds of thinking that are described in 19 through 21. It's lust. And lust is the passion to have something your lower nature wants.

It's that agitation you feel inside. It's always, I want, and it's just constantly propelling you in a direction. Ephesians 2, Paul said, we too all formerly lived in the lust of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind and were by nature children of wrath.

And James said, but each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust is conceived, that's a whole other thought we could pursue, but we won't. When lust is conceived, it gives birth to sin.

And when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death. Peter said, I love the way these different biblical writers, you know, let me just stop here for a second, because this was another thought I was having. I love the way the Lord expresses himself differently through different vessels.

You know, we're all unique individuals. You have a fingerprint that is absolutely unique from every other human being who has ever lived. That is amazing.

And I think it's true of your retina as well. And it's definitely true of your DNA. You are a unique person.

I was thinking of this when we were singing that song, and I was just looking out at you guys, and I was thinking, just rejoicing inside at what God is doing in your lives. It is so, I just don't have the words to describe the joy that wells up in my heart when I think about what he is doing in some of you. You are going to come forth as who you are.

I want to name names. I only know a few names here. Chris, and Andrew, where's Andrew at? Oh, Andrew's out in the back.

And Jackson, I know Jackson's name, and Clay. Each one of you guys, I'd say all of you guys, okay, but these are just some names I know. Every one of you guys, if you'll just yield to the Lord and go through this process we're describing, he is going to make you into a unique representation of his grace, a trophy of his grace that he will show forth for all eternity, just like he did with these men.

And I'm sitting here praising the Lord, and I'm thinking about that multitude in heaven, and our calling in life, our tiny little, you know, sliver that God has given us to do here at Pure Life Ministries is to help men who have been bound up in horrible sexual sin, and to see them redeemed to come into that life that God has for them. And he's going to do that for you men. He's going to transform you, as Pastor Ed said earlier, he's going to transform you by renewing your mind.

You will stay the same person, but the junk of the self-life will go away. Praise the Lord. And it will just be Jesus Christ living out his life through you, as we have already heard.

That's awesome. But this, you know, this self-life, you know, I told you I thought about changing the title. Maybe I'll call it, Sexual Addiction is a Disease.

Now that's a total con job, because, you know, just to get people to watch the video on the website. I may call it that, but it is a disease. It's a spiritual malady that we have opened ourselves up to and allowed this disease to fester and grow within us.

And there's an answer, praise God. There's an antidote, praise the Lord. You know, lust is this powerful energy inside of us.

And I'm not talking about sexual lust, so you ladies back there, you're not off the hook. We all have lust for things that are unlawful to us. If you are part of the human race, you have lust inside of you.

It's a desire, it's this agitation, I want something for myself. It's a selfish passion. Carla, are you listening to me? Carla, the more you give over to this thing, the more inflamed it's going to be inside of you.

You know, this whole rotten mess has got to go. It's got to go. It's got to go.

And the Lord is going to extract it from you if you let Him. I mean, if you're happy with who you are, okay, you can go down that path if that's what you want. But I'm telling you, God's got a glorious life for you.

He's going to replace that horrid self-life with His own life. Praise God. Praise the Lord.

Now, we can look at what that looks like. Look at verse 22. This is a passage I'd be glad to spend time on.

But the fruit of the Spirit. Now, let me just say, Paul said it exactly right because this is the description, nine characteristics of the Holy Spirit. This person of the Trinity, you know, this is describing what He is like.

But I'm going to change it a little bit for the sake of the sermon. And the way I'm going to change it is also true because it's the Holy Spirit who takes over inside of us if we let Him. So, I'm going to say that it's the fruit that comes forth from a Spirit-filled life.

Now, for you Pentecostals, and, you know, I am a longtime Pentecostal. Please understand, I'm a Pentecostal, and I'm not ashamed of that. But the evidence of the Spirit-filled life is not speaking in tongues.

It is the fruit of the Spirit that we're going to hear about here this morning. That's the truth of it, you know. I have seen the gifts of the Spirit in operation.

I've seen the real thing. But ten times as much, I've seen it done in the flesh when it isn't even the Lord. It's just some emotional experience or feeling or something or other people are given over to for their own self-glorification.

But I have seen the real thing. So, you fundamentalists and Calvinists, you listen to me. Even though charisma and all that, it's all true, you know, what you criticize them about.

But I have seen the real thing, and it's in the Bible. And I've seen it happen, and I've experienced it through my own life, you know. So, just keep your criticisms to yourself.

Pastor Jim, Southern Baptist pastor, is thoroughly enjoying this. Now listen, there's nine different fruit of the Spirit mentioned here, and we don't have time for a nine-point message. So, I'm just going to focus on the first three.

But these three are amazing. Let me tell you why. Because as I studied this, something became real to me.

Every human being alive is looking for these first three things. Every human being wants to feel loved, appreciated, and accepted. Every human being wants to feel happy, and contented, and fulfilled.

Every human being wants to feel at peace inside, and secure inside. Is that true or not? The problem is, we go to the wrong places looking for it. We're like fools that are always looking for the quick, easy answer.

So, we go to the things of the world, the things the devil offers us to try to satisfy those natural desires that God has instilled within us. God put it in you to want to be loved. God put it in you to want to feel joy and happiness.

He put it in you to want to feel at peace, and have that inner serenity, that sense of well-being. God put it in you. But the only way that you will feel fulfilled in those is through His Spirit.

So, let's just look at these three. We're off to a rousing start here this morning. The first is this, the fruit of the Spirit-filled life is love.

Now, you know, the world looks for love in all the wrong places, right? We did too. You know, the world's idea of love is all built in the self-life and fueled by lust, isn't it? And, you know, I'm going to read a little portion out of Sexual Idolatry here. I think it's the 16th chapter.

And I say in there something to the effect of I'm talking about how Hollywood has portrayed love as being this emotional experience that sweeps over a person's heart, you know, and maybe it's a married woman, and she just falls in love. Just even think of the word, falls in love. What is it, a pit or something? Yeah, it is, usually.

She falls in love, you know, and can't help herself, and so she's got to go commit adultery or run off with some other man that isn't her husband, because it's just so overwhelming. And all the audience cheers, and, you know, at the end of the movie, everyone lives happily ever after. It's all a facade.

It's all an illusion. It's all a lie. And, you know, well, let me just read this.

The world's concept of love is extremely shallow and goes no deeper than the emotions one is feeling at any particular time. Since each person is expected to consider his own interests before those of others, in other words, self-life, right? Love is no more substantial than the supercharged feelings of a new relationship. Hollywood's concept of love is, in reality, nothing more than sexual or emotional lust.

Based on this notion, one's feelings are the foundation for love. One can then safely say that commitment is only as secure as a person's fluctuating passions. Consequently, it's no great surprise that the divorce rate has skyrocketed in America as the level of devotion and the sense of commitment people have for each other has steadily declined.

And, you know, you hear about, I mean, by the millions, I guess, people get into their 40s and 50s, and all of a sudden, the husband runs off or the wife, you know, her feelings for her husband or his feelings for his wife, you know, they meet someone else that kind of creates a little bit of excitement, and they just are done with the relationship. 20 or 30 years invested in this relationship, they just walk away from it because it's not exciting anymore. The Bible renders the correct meaning of the word love.

Love is not based upon mysterious feelings which overwhelm some hapless person. It is a premeditated willful decision as well as an unselfish act of treating another person with kindness and respect. We know love by this.

The apostle John said that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren, and so on and so on. That's what real love is, right? That's the love of the Lord, and you know, it is the first fruit that's mentioned here because love is the essence of what God is. John said God is agape.

Whatever, I mean, you know, whatever the Lord is, this is the essence of his character. It is pure love, unselfish kindness to people, unselfish concern for others. That's what the Lord is.

Now, it's interesting here, you know, when you think about this because here it's called a fruit of the Spirit, and yet over and over in Scripture, we are commanded to love each other. But the reality is if I try to love you, my love is so mixed with self, with all my own baggage, my own junk, my own protective pride, and all, you know, it just gets watered down to nothing of any value. But there's something else I can do, and that is love you with the love of the Lord.

It's really, believe me, you don't want my love anyway, trust me. But the love of the Lord is something different, and the way it works is we're commanded to love. In other words, let's say, think of it as a door in your heart.

You open that door, get out of your comfort zone, step out, and do something for other people. You know what I'm saying? Just go against what feels natural to you, as Pastor Ed said earlier. You know, go against your nature to hole up and protect yourself, to hide behind your four walls and all that.

Go against that, get outside of yourself, and do something kind for someone else, and you will be amazed what comes over you and comes through you. It's a whole new way of doing life that we want you guys to

experience and develop while you're here, and you are. I mean, people are amazed who come in here.

One of the guy's parents, I think, or something, last weekend maybe, I got this third hand, so I don't know exactly what was said, but a mother or mother-in-law or someone said something about when she walked onto this property, she could really feel the presence of God, and she said, I've never seen humility expressed as I've seen it here. And that's just the love of the Lord, isn't it? That's all it is. It's just us stepping out of the way and letting God's love come through us.

Now, I said already that every human being wants to feel loved. We all do. You know, you tough guys, you can act like you don't, but I know better.

You want to feel loved. Some of you, I just want to hold you in my arms, do a little thing. Chris, I got your number, dude.

Big, tough ex-con. He just wants to be held and loved. I'm going to tell you the secret, how you get this love, Chris, okay? The secret to receiving love is to give love.

That's what opens the door. We're like just a pipe, you know, and when you open the pipe up and just start extending yourself to others, God's love flows through you, and you get overwhelmed with his love, and it's such a blessing. We had a young girl who we were ministering to a few years ago, Kathy and I, and I'll call her Belinda.

That's a name I don't even know anybody by that name, so no one can get her mixed up with anyone. I'll call her Belinda, and she was just a very needy girl, and she had a history with women of latching on to them and draining them dry because she wanted to feel their love, their acceptance. You know what I'm talking about, just kind of a needy soul, and she really latched on to Kathy more than me, but she just latched on and was just draining her, and I remember one time we were with her and another girl who we were also ministering to this other girl, and she so dominated everything by this thing of wanting to be loved that she just completely aced the other girl out of the picture, and we dealt with her, you know, with a mixture of love.

Well, it was all love, with a mixture of, what, kindness and gentleness, but also stern reproof. We mixed it all together, and we worked with her for a couple of years, and then, you know, things just kind of, she kind of went her own way, and we were busy and whatever. We didn't really talk to her much for a couple of years, and Kathy and I were Skyped with her the other day, and she was describing, she's a biblical counselor now, and she was describing her ministry to young girls, and wow, she's like a different person.

It was amazing to us. I mean, she was describing one situation where this young woman she's ministering to is demon-possessed. I mean, frothing at the mouth, demon-possessed.

I mean, the devil, you know, just coming through that woman's face, and just in a hateful, devil-filled rage, and she has been ministering to this young girl for several months now, and, you know, she was like a different person. The needy thing was just completely gone. I was blessed talking to her, you know, because, why? Because she learned the secret of giving her life away.

Instead of becoming this needy sponge that attached itself to people, now she started giving out, and God's love is just all over her. Such a blessing, and that's what the Lord wants to do for you guys. You know, He wants to replace that old, selfish nature with a selfless nature, and you are going to find, as you allow Him to do His work inside you, you are going to find the joy and the blessing of what it's like to let the

love of God flow through you.

Praise the Lord. Okay, number two, the fruit of the Spirit-filled life is joy. Deary, could you give me my water, please? The joy that comes from the Holy Spirit produces a deep sense of contentment, fulfillment, and happiness that is not dependent on favorable circumstances.

Thank you. You know, the best the offer you are these little short stints of happiness or satisfaction with some experience or something or other, but they are so short-lived, aren't they? They don't satisfy. They don't leave you feeling fulfilled.

It's just like this little thing, it's there and it's gone, but the joy of the Lord is something much different. Now, I've got to, when I'm talking about the joy of the Lord, I've got to, you know, say what it isn't, first of all, because there's confusion about it. The joy of the Lord, when we're talking about that, we're not talking about people who are happy and cheerful by nature.

You know, a bunch of you guys are that way, you've always been that way, and, you know, it's just who you are. You've got a quick smile, and you see the bright side of everything, you know, the glass is half full, and, you know, you like people, you're easy to get along with. That's good.

There's nothing wrong with that. It's just who you are, but that's not what the joy of the Lord is. The joy of the Lord is not something you're born with.

It's something that the Holy Spirit puts into you. You know, natural happiness is empty, but the joy of the Lord is fulfilling. Natural happiness is self-centered, but the joy of the Lord is built around the principle it's more blessed to give than to receive.

Natural happiness is shallow. The joy of the Lord is deep and rewarding. Natural happiness is temporal.

The joy of the Lord is eternal. You know, there's just such a difference, and, again, I'm not saying anything wrong if you happen to be, you know, a happy-go-lucky sort of person. It's all right, but just don't mistake that for being the joy of the Lord, because that's not the joy of the Lord, and the joy of the Lord isn't when everything goes your way, and you're happy about something because you got a promotion, or, you know, you had a baby, or you married the girl you loved, or something.

Everything's going your way, so all of a sudden you're happy. Don't call that the joy of the Lord, because that's not the joy of the Lord, because the joy of the Lord is deeper than circumstances. You know, and, again, there's nothing wrong with being happy when things go well, but that's not the joy of the Lord.

Paul, when he was describing the process of repentance, compared worldly sorrow with godly sorrow. Remember that? And worldly sorrow is because circumstances, you know, you don't want to face the consequences of your sins, so you feel sorry about what you did, but it's not godly sorrow that changes the heart, and the opposite of sorrow, of course, is joy, and it's the same thing. There's a worldly joy, and there's a godly joy, and it's the godly joy the Lord wants to implant in you, and nurture in you, and cause to grow, and come to fruition.

Praise the Lord. You know, and I'll just say one other thing about it. When we're talking about the joy of the Lord, it's not like it's just some characteristic that happens when you are a Christian.

It is the joy of the Lord. In other words, He is joyful. Some of you guys need to know that.

The Lord is full of joy, and actually, the Bible says a number of things about it. I'm not going to get into that, but when you really search it out, you see all the different places where it's talked about in Scripture, how joyful the Lord is, but I want to read this pulpit commentary quote, because this guy really captured it. He said, The brightness and beauty of the world are reflections from the blessedness of God, because He is glad.

Nature is glad. Flowers bloom. Birds sing.

Puppies and kittens frolic. Look at the beauty of nature that hasn't been marred by the curse. Rich, green forest cities of busy insect life, flashing ocean waves, and the pure blue sky above, and all that is sweet and lovely in creation swells into a grand symphony of gladness, because the mighty Spirit that haunts it is Himself overflowing with joy.

And you know what? If you belong to the Lord, one day, you are going to hear the Lord say, enter into what? The joy of the Lord. Think about that. What is that place like? What is that like? There's millions of people living there right now.

It is an actual place. What is it like? Enter into the joy of the Lord. Man, that's the place I want to go.

So, you know, you guys, like myself, you spent years chasing these little wisps of happiness. It's like a mirage or a ghost. Just when you think you're there, it's just nothing there.

It's just gone, right? And that brought you to such frustration and misery that you had to do something. And, you know, praise God that it's that way. What if the Lord allowed sin to really satisfy you? Man, we would have never come looking for help, would we? We would have just stayed in our sin.

I would have just stayed in my sin. The reason I came crying out to God was because I was so miserable inside, and I knew that what this world was offering me was not going to satisfy me. That's not what the Lord's offering you.

He's offering to fill you with a deep, solid joy that carries you through life. What an awesome thing. All right, number three, the fruit of the Spirit-filled life is peace.

Here again, this is something the world is looking for. And, you know, with peace, there's a couple of different aspects of it I should mention. The first one is that we have to have peace with God.

You know, this is important because we are born into a race that is at war with its maker, right? The human race is in rebellion. It's a great insurrection that we came into through Satan, who's the one who started it in heaven way back when. And so we are born into this, but God gave us a provision for knowing what to do, and that provision is the conscience.

Because the human conscience, which God put inside of us, is like some kind of a monitoring system. You know, like some people have heart monitors, right? And I don't know anything about them, but I think, does a heart monitor tell you when your heart isn't doing what it's supposed to do or something? Well, that's kind of what the conscience is, our spiritual heart, is that the Lord uses the conscience to sound an alarm inside of us, so when we're doing wrong, we'll know that we're doing wrong, that we're displeasing God with our actions, that we're doing something bad and unlawful spiritually. That's what the conscience is for.

The world's answer to that feeling of guilt is what? It's to pull the plug on the alarm, to silence it. You know, and you see these movements, like the whole homosexual movement is an example of this, of how they have done everything possible in this nation to silence the voice of criticism of that particular sin. Now, that sin really, in a certain sense, is no worse than gossip or anything else.

And those people need the Lord. Gossipers need the Lord. We all need the Lord.

You know, it's not like they're any worse or any more destined for hell than, you know, Aunt Bea down the street or something. We all need the Lord. We're all destined for hell.

But anyway, it's just an example of how the world attempts to silence the voice of God, to silence the conviction of the Holy Spirit. And then the other thing I'll mention about peace is also, you know, the peace of God. And of course, you know, it only stands to reason that you'll never experience the peace of God until you experience the peace with God, right? You've got to be right with the Lord through repentance and, you know, get your life right, come into a life of obedience, and then that opens the door for the Lord to come in and do His mighty work inside of you.

That peace of God is the sense of inward serenity that Paul described, the peace that passes all understanding. The world, they just don't get it. They will never understand the joy of the Lord or the peace of the Lord or the love of the Lord.

They will never understand it. They don't have the capacity to understand it. The best they can do to quiet that inward turmoil, you know, Michael Thursday night was sharing the torment he used to go through in life.

And Nate also has shared, he didn't really talk about it so much the other night, but he talked about how even though he was going through that period of terrible turmoil, and he has shared his heart with Kathy and me, and in tears, how horrible it was when he went through a dark period, you know, but how the Lord, looking back, he realized the Lord was holding him up through the whole thing. Well, you know, when you go through that inward turmoil in life, that is there for a reason, because something isn't right in your life. It's like a disease.

You know, your body feels all out of sorts when you're diseased with something. It isn't, your body isn't operating the way it should operate with a healthy body, and your body is telling you that something is wrong. And that's what that inner turmoil does, is something is not right, and you just feel miserable inside and all upset.

Well, how does the world handle it? Get drunk, take drugs, or the medical field, you know, will pump you full of psychotropic drugs until your mind is so numb that the conviction of the Holy Ghost can't even get through to you. But I praise God that His peace is something much deeper, much more abiding. Praise the Lord.

Jesus said, my peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you, not as the world do I give to you. And Paul said, to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. And Isaiah said, you will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you because he trusts in you.

You know, that is what the Lord is bringing all of us into, who will yield to Him and obey Him. Now, you know, the Lord uses many different things to help us to grow and mature, you know, through life. But I'm telling you, the primary thing He uses, the thing He's got to do, He's got to tear down the self-life.

He's got to do it. What I was saying about Pastor Ed not knowing, you know, and what he shared, Proverbs 14, 12, there was a way which seems right unto a man, but the end thereof is death. And when you said that, I was thinking about in 1 Corinthians where Paul talked about the cross being a stumbling block to the Greek mind, which is us, the Western mind.

You know, it's a stumbling block. It doesn't make sense. Our logic doesn't like the way that God laid it all out, does it? And then we sang that first song, Amazing Love, where it's talking about Jesus dying on a cross that we may live.

Where's the logic in that? You know what I mean? You see how corrupted our logic is that it doesn't connect, it doesn't jive with God's logic. And we're arrogant enough to think we're right and He's wrong. Right? I mean, that's the way the world thinks.

And we want to think that way. It doesn't make sense. This is the answer you came up with? To send your son to die on a cross? That's your answer to our problems? Yeah, it was the absolute perfect answer.

Absolute perfect, unbelievable answer. No human could have contrived such an answer. You know, you look at Hinduism, look at Islam, practically any type of religion in this world, and you will find some human logic in it.

But you cannot find human logic in Christianity. It ain't there. It just ain't there.

So, you know, this cross life, this Calvary life, is really what we're talking about. You know, and we're talking about the disease of sexual addiction. Maybe I won't call it that.

What is the answer? He eradicates it through the cross, doesn't he? So amazing. It says, David said, you know, well, he said, the Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit. Now, I think probably the opposite is true.

The Lord is far from the hardhearted, and he can't save those who are strong in themselves. Does that sound right? I mean, I think that's probably right. This word for broken here, used there in the Hebrew, is shabar.

And let me just give you a couple of examples how else it's used in Scripture in the Old Testament. In Exodus 9, it says, throughout Egypt, hail beat down. That's shabar.

Everything growing in the fields. And in Exodus 32, Moses threw the tablets out of his hand, breaking them to pieces. That's the word shabar.

And then in 1 Kings 13, the lion has mauled him. That's shabar. The lion shabarred him.

I'm not a Hebrew scholar, Pastor Jim, okay? 1 Kings 19, then a great and powerful wind shattered the rocks. That's shabar. In 2 Kings 23, Josiah smashed the sacred stones.

That's shabar. That's what the Lord is going to do with your self-life, praise God. Praise God.

Because all the misery that you feel inwardly in life can be directly traced back to your self-life. And, you know, we protect that thing with everything in us, we protect it. Because it hurts when the Lord comes in to tear it down.

It does hurt. There is some pain involved. And yet, I'm telling you guys, it is an amazing thing how the Lord uses it to set you free.

I can look at my own testimony, whether it was through periods of suffering, like, you know, something physical, or for me, it tends to be more mental or emotional suffering, or whether it's a convicting message, because there's been times the Lord has, you know, done a number on my self-life through that kind of thing, whatever He has used. I look back, like, let's say 20, 25 years ago, and I remember that period of time just stands out to me, just in particular, because I can look back and see how the Lord intermingled times of joy and times of sorrow, times of correction and times of encouragement, times of blessing me with just tremendous revelations of Himself, and times of severe discipline. And He knows how to do it perfectly, man.

You can trust Him. I promise you, you can trust Him. Just step off the cliff.

Just step off the cliff and quit resisting Him and fighting Him. You can trust Him. He will take you through some times of discipline.

He will, but He's holding you through the whole thing. That's the amazing thing. He will take you through it, but He's holding you at the same time.

He may not let you feel like you're being held, but that may be part of it. And really, the hardest corrections I've gone through have been those times of feeling completely alienated from Him, like as if He just pulled completely away from me and left me to myself. Oh, you want to be your own guy, huh? Okay, try it out for a few months.

See how you like it. Well, I didn't like it at all. I can promise you I didn't like it.

My wife liked it even less. Bottom line of what I'm trying to get at here, guys, I'm just trying to present a simple truth for you that I'm hoping and praying the Lord will just lodge in your minds is that He cannot build you up until He's torn you down, and He cannot fill you with His Spirit until He's emptied you of self. You know, and that is just one of the most, I don't know if powerful is the right term to use, most powerful truths of the Christian experience.

But it is certainly one of the most important principles. So I'm going to leave you with something Hosea said out of chapter 6. He said, Come, let us return to the Lord, for He has torn us, but He will heal us. He has wounded us, but He will bandage us.

He will revive us after two days. He will raise us up on the third day that we may live before Him. Praise the Lord.

Let's pray. Lord, I just, I don't know, just saying thank you is so weak. The things I've described here this morning mean everything to me.

You know that, Lord. It's just so easy for me to remember how miserable and lost I was at one time, just how empty I was, how filled with shame I was over the things I was doing, and just the dirtiness of my life, the dirtiness of my thinking. And the change didn't come like my human logic would have imagined it.

It didn't happen the way I thought it would happen. You came and set me free by attacking me. And I thank you for it, Lord.

I thank you. I thank you. A million thank yous forever and ever.

I will be thanking you and praising you and worshiping you in heaven for setting me free of that horrible self-life that used to dominate me, used to control me, used to be me. And I haven't arrived anywhere, Lord, but I know that compared to what I once was, I am free inside. I know what your love feels like.

I know what the joy of the Lord is. It's my daily experience. I know what the peace of God is like.

And it's only because of the work that you've done inside me. And you will be the only one who will get any glory for what you've done inside this man. And I thank you for it, Lord.

And I thank you for what you're doing inside these men here. What a glorious and wonderful thing to watch them being renewed in their minds through your work, Holy Spirit. It's just such an awesome thing.

How many lives you've transformed here at Pure Life Ministries and set men on the right path and set them going down a direction. And then we run into them years later, and they are just completely different people. Praise the Lord.

We thank you for it. I just pray, Lord, that you will bless this word to every heart here today. In Jesus' name, amen.

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