Good morning. Let’s begin by unpacking this thought: One of the greatest and most liberating days in the life of a follower, a disciple of Christ, occurs when the disciple truly realizes and then embraces his deep and desperate need for Jesus—not only at the point of salvation but in all of life. Of course, we each need a Savior. But becoming aware and, in fact, desperate for Him in our pursuit of Holiness changes everything about us. This change begins with knowing that I need all of Jesus on my best days as much as I need Him on my worst days. To walk with the fruit of the Spirit to discern His voice and follow His will, I need a deep awareness of my need for Him. Family, I consider this awareness of our great need for Jesus a merciful gift. When left on our own, we grow weak and lose our way. But God promises strength and guidance to the surrendered soul. And remember, God makes promises based on His perfect knowledge.

The Apostle Paul knows this. He writes to the Philippians from prison, but in truth, Paul writes from a place of freedom: “I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. 13 I can do all this through him who gives me strength” (4:12b-13). Family, Paul can declare this because the substance of his faith is Christ alone. He finds strengthened by and through the Gospel; Paul’s heart is guided by the Good news. Church, what or who is guiding your life? It is important to consider the answer to this question because whoever or whatever guides our lives determines our thinking and our heart position. When the Lord guides us, He gives us the strength we need to live according to His Word. Remember that His promises are an expression of His love and care for His children. The Spirit of God imparts understanding of God’s Word, giving us guidance that enables us to follow and obey. And be assured, that although you may claim that God guides you, Charles Stanley rightly contends that the truth of your profession is evidence in your daily activity. Thankfully, within God’s promises are His willingness and instruction that He alone is to be our source of guidance and strength. We can do nothing on our own: Our following and obeying does not emerge from our efforts but from Christ’s alone. We must cultivate an attitude of trust and surrender as He guides us along paths of righteousness. We must let Him help us align our thoughts with His thoughts because our thinking determines who we are and how we live.

We live in a world opposed to God. That recognition means that partial or temporary surrender to Him is insufficient if we want to live as He desires us to live. In our awareness of our need for Him, we will develop a sensitivity to the leadership of the Holy Spirit. Gospel writer and disciple John tells us: “But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come (John 16:13). Church, listen. If we don’t feel our deep need for God, we tend not to cry out to Him or live in surrender and trust of Him. You and I make horrible gods! As we have read, Paul is at peace with his circumstances because he doesn’t rest his hope in them. He rests his hope on the Gospel of Jesus. We are similarly strengthened by and through the Gospel.

Embrace the Gospel as the greatest treasure of your life. Listen, Family. Paul writes in Ephesians 6:10, “Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might.” And in his second letter to the Corinthians, Paul also writes,

But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. 10 That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong (12:9-10).

Here, Paul expresses deliberate dependence upon Christ.

Deliberate dependence becomes a source of strength for the trusting heart. That truth is recorded throughout the pages of scripture. The greater our awareness of our need, the greater opportunity we have to lean on Christ. So often, we try to be the guide in our own lives, and we don’t even know where we are going. Our difficulties don’t disqualify us from God’s purposes. In fact, they can deepen our intimacy with Him. Relying on Christ, His strength and His guidance, turns our moments of despair into testimonies of His faithfulness. Paul even goes so far as to say that he delights in his own weaknesses because in them the power of Christ will rest upon him. Our awareness of our need for God, of our need for His promises and of their application in our lives is necessary for our daily walk in Him. These promises are not reserved for spiritual giants or superheroes. No, they are for each and every child of God. We are charged to be good stewards of these promises and to treasure God’s Word—in which they are found.

So, let us ask again, who or what is guiding your life? Is it your thinking, your emotions, or your own understanding? Does the Word of God dwell in you richly? God graciously reveals how He thinks in His Word. In His Word, He gives instruction on how to live and grow in Him. Knowledge of His Word makes us actively aware of our great need for our God. When the Lord is our guide (\*Exodus 13:21-22), He gives us the strength we need to live as He desires. Become aware of your great need of Him! Desperately pursue His Holiness.

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\*Exodus 13:21-22

21 By day the Lord went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to guide them on their way and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so that they could travel by day or night. 22 Neither the pillar of cloud by day nor the pillar of fire by night left its place in front of the people.

Passages in support of this sermon:

Psalm 121:1-2

I lift up my eyes to the mountains—

where does my help come from?

My help comes from the Lord,

the Maker of heaven and earth.

Philippians 4:11-13

11 I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. 12 I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. 13 I can do all this through him who gives me strength.