

Growing Through Dangers in the Christian Life

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References: **Luke 10**, Deuteronomy 8:15; 1 Kings 12:11; 2 Chronicles 10:11; Ezekiel 2:6; Matthew 7:15; Matthew 11:28; Luke 10:19; Luke 11:12; John 3:16; Romans 8:28; Romans 10:17; Philippians 4:13; James 1:2-3; 2 Peter 3:18; Revelation 9:3-5

Hello, how are you? Hello, hello. Welcome. I'm just showing off; I know a couple of languages a little bit. So we are happy you're here. I'm a visitor myself, so I'm in the same boat as you are. I've been here about six times a year, and I enjoy telling men and women, boys and girls, about the Lord Jesus Christ.

And we've been doing a series on animals. Now that's an interesting subject, and today we'll just share the screen. There we go, share. Look at this, it's great. This is the 16th message on animals. I've been just enjoying studying about animals, and I'm trying to relate animals in the Bible to everyday life, our life, and it's some—there's an echo here somewhere. Let me see. I'm not too sure why this—we'll get our techie up here; he knows what he's doing. I don't know what I'm doing. Okay, turn off the speakers.

There we go. Any echoing? No echoing. Well, I don't want to hear myself anyway, but I hope that you're ready to hear not me. I don't want you to hear me; I want you to hear what the Word of God says. And I'm hoping that I am just a servant trying to do what God wants me to do, and that is to share what God has for us.

Now, the animal which I've chosen for this morning is, exactly, a scorpion. I don't like scorpions. And my title is Growing Through the Dangers of the Christian Life. But this is—both if you know and love the Lord Jesus Christ, this message is for you, but if you haven't really got into being part of the family of God, if you don't really understand what it is to be born again or regenerated or saved, you're in the right place. Because we're going to be talking from the Bible to all sorts of people.

So, growing through dangers in the Christian life. The Bible shows scorpions; they're a symbol of pain, danger, and spiritual torment. We are **all** in danger. We **all** have pain. We all are attacked by one system or another system. So this message has taken the scorpion as an example, and we're going to see what the Bible says. Because we say here at 16th, if it isn't in the Bible, we don't want to talk about it. We want to talk about what God says in the Bible.

Now, scorpions—have you ever seen a scorpion? I've seen—yeah, I've been to 79 different countries. I've seen scorpions in three of them. I lived for 20 years in a place that I couldn't go to the washroom at nighttime with all the shoes on because there were scorpions on the ground. Seriously. They're just baby ones, but there were scorpions. And we've had people struck by scorpions.

Scorpions are mentioned several times in Scripture, unusually as a symbol of danger, suffering, discipline, or spiritual opposition. And if you don't know the Lord, maybe one of the reasons is because you're being struck by a scorpion. See, the devil doesn't want you to know about them. And we've just sung these gorgeous, beautiful songs about Jesus and what He does for us, what He's done for us, what He's going to do for us. And if you haven't come to the realization of that, maybe it's because there's scorpions in your life. I'm telling you, there's been scorpions in my life, too. Let's see what God has for us, because it's a subject that we don't like in a sense, but it's wonderful to know how God can take care of those things.

So, okay, we'll just get going here.

In the Old Testament, in Deuteronomy 8:15, God led Israel through the wilderness filled with serpents and scorpions:

[Deuteronomy 8:15 NKJV]

who led you through that great and terrible wilderness, in which were fiery serpents and scorpions and thirsty land where there was no water; who brought water for you out of the flinty rock;

Remember they went through—remember those 40 years? Walking through the desert full of scorpions. And you know what? Underneath each rock, there could be a scorpion. In Argentina, where I lived for a few years, there were scorpions. And you have to be careful when you're playing soccer: if there's a big rock there, you've got to move the rock out carefully 'cause there could be a scorpion there. And God uses these as an illustration for us.

1 Kings 12:11-14 speaks of chastening the people with scorpions:

[1 Kings 12:11 NKJV]

And now, whereas my father put a heavy yoke on you, I will add to your yoke; my father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scourges!"

God used the scorpions to chasten His people. See, God allows us—He **never** tempts us. Never tempts us. Don't say, "Well, God tempted me." No, God **never** tempted me. But He allows us to go through difficulties so that we will look up. I have problems in my life. And why do I have problems in my life? Because I've taken my eyes off of Jesus. And when I take my eyes off of Jesus, sometimes He chastises me.

Also, the Bible says in 2 Chronicles 10:11–12, parallel account of Rehoboam, and it uses harsh words:

[2 Chronicles 10:11 NKJV]

And now, whereas my father put a heavy yoke on you, I will add to your yoke; my father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scourges!"

Now, why is this not going up on the screen? Sorry. You—I can hear him thinking back there. You can take a look if you want. Everything is here, is it right? Share. Share. Oh, thank you. He makes it so easy.

So, okay, what we were saying in the Old Testament: again, we read this, God led Israel through the desert. We know that. We also find in the book, Rehoboam speaks about chastising, and they weren't obeying God. They weren't obedient. God used this animal, scorpions, to chastise them.

Also, we find in Ezekiel, Ezekiel is told not to fear rebellious people, though he dwelt among scorpions:

[Ezekiel 2:6 NKJV]

"And you, son of man, do not be afraid of them nor be afraid of their words, though briars and thorns are with you and you dwell among scorpions; do not be afraid of their words or dismayed by their looks, though they are a rebellious house.

Scorpions are used of God to chastise His people.

So, lessons. We're going to have lessons from scorpions: growing through the danger of the Christian life. Danger, danger! When you see a scorpion, it's danger. Okay? Keep that word in mind: **danger**.

Then we're going to talk about scorpions teach us about the dangers of it, but also scorpions teach us about the difficulties we must endure. We go through danger. We go through difficulties. And what else do we have? Scorpions teach us about the dominion we must exercise. We have dominion over scorpions if we are Christians, which means you don't put your hand in a snake pit to get bit, but we have possibilities to reject, to leave behind, to not enter into the sins of this world. We have the power through God to eliminate scorpions in our lives. Even though sometimes a scorpion might bite you, God has given us a way out.

In Deuteronomy, in Luke, it says scorpions are feared creatures in biblical lands. They hide beneath rocks, they strike unexpectedly, and they cause great pain. I've seen people bit by scorpions. It's great pain, great pain. God uses them as an illustration of spiritual realities every believer faces. So if you're a believer, you have to discern.

But thank God, even though that scorpion is hidden under that rock, there's a way out. Jesus is the way. Jesus says:

[Matthew 11:28 NKJV]

Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

We can have rest in Jesus. We can have protection in Jesus. Jesus will help us through the difficulties if we're part of His family. Jesus wants us to accept Him as God's provision. God has provided Jesus. Jesus died on the cross for my sins and your sins, and the way out is by accepting Him.

As Harold said, 70 years ago, up at Amble Island, I said, "Lord Jesus, come into my life. Come in today. Come into my life, Lord Jesus, and stay." And He stayed. He's never left me. He's helped me. I've been to 79 different countries. I've had two fathers, four mothers— orphaned. I lived in the North, but God was always there. God was always there to protect me. And even though scorpions were around me, attacking me, God healed me and helped me. And I know other people in this congregation have been hit by scorpions. We're talking spiritually now, figuratively. But God is there for you. And that's what I like about it.

In the New Testament, for instance, Luke chapter 10, verse 19, Jesus gave His disciples authority over serpents and scorpions:

[Luke 10:19 NKJV]

Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you.

We have authority over them. In the name of Jesus, He will help us. He will help us through the difficulties.

I was telling one young lady this morning: this week has been terrible. I got bit by a scorpion. Well, I was at home, and a huge problem came into my life—a huge problem. I was struck by a scorpion. Ah! It hurt me so much. I still have a pit in my stomach. I still don't sleep at night, even though God has helped me, God has given me back my joy, my happiness, my peace. But still, I've got blood in my veins, and I still feel bad. I'm not going to go into it, but God helped me. God allowed me. See, I prepared two sermons this week, and Satan wasn't happy with me. And that's why he sent along a scorpion to bite me. But I overcome it in the name of Jesus, and that's why I'm here today, even though I haven't slept very much.

But Jesus says we have authority over scorpions. And you know what we can say? We can say, "Get behind me, Satan!" We can say, "¡Afuera!" Get out of here! "¡Fuera de aquí!" We can say, whatever language you have, you can talk to God, and He will listen to you.

See, God talks to me every day of my life through the Word of God. Are you in the Word of God? If you want God to talk to you, this is the way He talks to you. And also He talks to His people. But God wants you to talk to Him, your Father.

See, I didn't have a father figure. I didn't have a father figure, but I had a Heavenly Father. Oh, 70 years I've had a Heavenly Father that has **never, never** let me down. And I can look up, and I can talk to my Heavenly Father. I say, "Father, I was stung this week. Father, I'm in difficulty. I'm discouraged. I'm upset. I'm distraught." And He comes in, and He helps me.

Do you have that hope? You can have that hope. If you don't have Jesus, you don't know. We used to sing a song, "O to be without a Savior, with no hope." We have hope as we've been singing this morning. You have hope. I have hope. If you have Jesus in your life, you have hope. If you don't have Jesus in your life, I don't know where you're going to find your hope. You can't find your hope in politics. You can't find your hope in social media. You can't find hope in philosophy or psychology or any of those things. But I found my hope in Jesus—an orphan—and I have joy. I have joy, wonderful joy, because I asked Jesus to come into my heart. And even though scorpions are all around me, Jesus gave me authority over scorpions.

Luke chapter 11, verse 12 says:

[Luke 11:12 NKJV]

Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?

A father would not give his son a scorpion when he asked for an egg. My Heavenly Father is there listening to me. His ears are listening to me 24/7. My computer, my phone, they run out of battery. There's no Wi-Fi. I can't communicate. I can't get on WhatsApp. I can't get on Messenger. I can't get on. But the channel is open 24 hours a day, and Jesus—the person that's Father—is listening to me.

So I'm not scared of scorpions. I mean, I don't like them. Physically, I don't like them. But isn't it wonderful that God is there?

In Revelation 9:3-5:

[Revelation 9:3-5 NKJV]

³ Then out of the smoke locusts came upon the earth. And to them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power. ⁴ They were commanded not to harm the grass of the earth, or any green thing, or any tree, but only those men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads. ⁵ And they were not given authority to kill them, but to torment them for five months. Their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it strikes a man.

Demonic locusts have power like scorpions to torment people. That's what they want. Scorpions want to torment people. When the children of Israel were walking through the desert, they were always looking. When I got up at night, I put on my shoes, and I turned on the lights to go to the washroom. I'm looking for scorpions. And we as Christians—and if you're not a Christian—you've got to look out for scorpions. You've got to look out for sin. You've got to look out for the ruses, the tricks of the devil. The devil wants to take control of you, like the devil wants to take control of me, but we've got to say, "Get out of here!" In the name of Jesus, we have victory. Scorpions are wonderful examples.

1. Dangers We Must Discern

So first of all, quickly, we're going to look at discernment. Scorpions teach us about the danger we must discern. There's danger in our lives, and we have to discern about dangers. We have to realize that there's danger. I ask the Lord so often, "Lord, I'm on the internet; give me discernment. Lord, I'm going to this place over here; Lord, give me discernment. Help me, guide me, direct me." And He does. I mean, I'm never alone.

When I lived with a person here, and then another person over here, and another person over there, and then I moved over here, then I went to Douglas Elementary School, then I went to Renfrew Elementary School, and then went to Inman Elementary School, and then I went over to Rupert Renfrew, God was always with me. I moved around. Discernment!

The Bible says:

[Ezekiel 2:6 NKJV]

"And you, son of man, do not be afraid of them nor be afraid of their words, though briars and thorns are with you and you dwell among scorpions; do not be afraid of their words or dismayed by their looks, though they are a rebellious house.

We have sin all around us. In the New Testament, it says:

[Matthew 7:15 NKJV]

"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.

And we're going to see that as we go through the message.

Old Testament—here's an Old Testament example in Ezekiel. God warned Ezekiel that he would live a life among people like scorpions: rebellious, hostile, and resistant to God's truth. Let me read that again: Ezekiel 2:6. I don't know why it just went off again, but anyway. God warns Ezekiel that he would live among people like scorpions: rebellious, hostile, and resistant to God's truth. That's what it says in Ezekiel in the Old Testament. Ezekiel needed spiritual discernment to recognize the dangers all around him, and so do we.

How many times I've phoned up an elder when I was younger, and even now I've phoned up people, mentors in my life: "Listen, what do you think about this? Hey, should I go here?" We have to work together because there's scorpions everywhere. There's sin everywhere. Listen.

In the New Testament, we have an example in Matthew 7:15. Jesus warns of false prophets who appear harmless, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You want to come and see? I don't know why... I didn't touch anything. I didn't really... I think it's Roy's fault, don't you? Okay, there we go. New Testament. Maybe that's the problem. I don't know what's in here.

So we have this New Testament and the Old Testament. And there it is. Look at that. What a beautiful picture! Look at that picture. Everything looks rosy. That's why we need discernment. I need discernment. You need discernment.

If you've never come to the Lord, you've got to realize what is being said here at 16th Avenue Gospel Chapel is biblical. It's not the teaching, the tradition, and the tradition type of thing; it's the truth. But of course, the scorpions all around you will say, "No, it's just another theory." But it's biblical! You're seeing the verses. Look up there; look up there. Jesus warns of false prophets who appear harmless, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. Ask the Lord for discernment. I do. I ask the Lord every day for discernment.

Like a hidden scorpion beneath a stone, spiritual deception is often... often what? Concealed. Be careful of the internet. I am so careful of the internet. "Oh, but Ron, it's so useful." Use it! Discernment! Discernment!

Now, how can we apply this spiritually? Well, first of all, many believers are harmed spiritually not by obvious sin, but by subtle compromise. Don't compromise. Don't give in. "Oh, just a little bit. Well, everybody's doing it, Ron. Everybody's doing it, so why can't you do it? Everybody's doing it, okay? Everybody's going there. Everybody's going there. Go ahead, Bob. All the Christians are going there; go there." No! No! It comes in little packages sometimes, you know. It's not a huge sin—just one little step, two little steps.

I was going to use an example of the World Cup with technology now. I don't know if you noticed, but one guy was offside—his right big toe was offside. Did you see that line if you were watching it? It was about three inches over the mark. And that's where it starts: just a little step, a little step, a little step, and then you get the red card—the yellow card. Scorpions hide before they sting.

I'll live nowhere a scorpion can get you. I remember one time I was working at camp, and a guy was climbing on the roof to go up to clean the roof off, and he got bit by a scorpion. He didn't see it. He put his hand over the edge, and bang, there was a scorpion on the roof, and

it got him. We got him to the hospital; everything was okay. But I could give you many examples of it.

Satan often works through false doctrine. Thank God here at 16th, you've got men and women who check out the doctrine. And I always say to people, I better take this off. They're going to send an ambulance here because I'm getting excited. When you get excited on these things and you make too much noise, you know, it goes, yeah. So if an ambulance comes here, you just tell them I'm okay. A scorpion didn't bite me this time!

But thank God, as I was saying before I was so rudely interrupted, that we have men and women here who can discern. And if you have problems, ask them: "Is this biblical? Is that biblical? Should I do this? Should I?" And then pray over it. False doctrine, how about ungodly influences? "But I want to win them to the Lord, so I'll go to the bar. Well, I'll only have one or two beer, and I'll have maybe just one little puff, but I want to win them for Jesus."

Oh, thank you. Thank you, Norma. Norma, I thought you were going to faint. Maybe we should have gotten the hospital coverage! You can't do that. It's ungodly influence. How about worldly philosophies? How about hidden temptations? How about a mature Christian learns to discern danger before it's true? A mature Christian!

Take your cameras out; take your phones out. Take a picture, go home, check it out. These are dangers that you and I face, and together we can overcome them. We can have victory in Jesus. But by myself, I flunk many times; I goof many times. How about ask God for wisdom to recognize spiritual danger?

So ask God for wisdom. Ask God for discernment. Read the Bible. How many times do I look in the Bible and say, "Lord, should I do this?" No, it shows me directly I shouldn't do it. It's not godly. It's not healthy. It's not rightful. God is so real. Christianity is so real.

What hidden influence in your life could be quickly weakening your walk with God? Are you walking with God? Are you rejoicing in God? Are you having abundant life? Abundant life! Happy life! But is there sin in your life? Are there little scorpions—just little guys, not big ones, just little scorpions—are they eating away at you? Spiritual pride!

Growth comes when we learn to distinguish truth from error and holiness from compromise. These are such truths. I'm learning them all the time, and I've been on the road for 70 years. God is so true.

2. Difficulties We Must Endure

Second, quickly: difficulties—endure the wilderness. The wilderness is full of scorpions and serpents. The world around us is full of serpents and scorpions. We have to endure the wilderness. Sometimes God allows us to go through problems that you don't know why, you don't understand why, but you have to learn to endure them and say, "God, I don't know why. I don't question You, God, but teach me what You want to teach me through this difficulty." That's the secret: "Teach me, Lord, what You are teaching me, or You want to teach me, through this difficulty." And He will. He will. He will.

We have to endure some of these things. But maybe it is God, as I said earlier, maybe it is God making you go through this so you look up. Maybe you're not looking up. Maybe you're trying to go to the psychiatrist. Maybe you're going to read the book on how to help in my life, how to live a happy life. Maybe you go to conferences, you know. Go to Jesus! Go to Jesus! Go to the Word of God! Philosophers and all of these "how to do it yourself" and self-gratification—

In the Old Testament, in Deuteronomy, it says the journey was difficult, but God used the wilderness to humble, teach, and strengthen His people:

[Deuteronomy 8:15 NKJV]

who led you through that great and terrible wilderness, in which were fiery serpents and scorpions and thirsty land where there was no water; who brought water for you out of the flinty rock;

Forty years they went through the desert, and it taught them humbleness, strength, and they had to go through it. What a trip it was! What a trip! Israel traveled through the wilderness filled with scorpions and serpents, and God was with them, even though they went—the way is this way, there's a way, but how many times did they go to the left? How many times did they go to the right? How many times? They built the calf, the golden calf, and started worshiping a golden calf. And they knew on Mount Sinai that we're not to have any gods before Him. Scorpions, sin, sin!

How about ourselves? How about in the New Testament, in James 1:2–3, believers are instructed to count trial as joy because testing produces maturity:

[James 1:2-3 NKJV]

² My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, ³ knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.

I hope I'm mature today because of all the problems I had in my life. Why didn't I have a happy home? Why didn't I? Why did I have—why, why? But I learned early in my life, thanks to the local Christians at Cascades Gospel Chapel, I learned that:

[Romans 8:28 NKJV]

And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.

And I love God with all my heart, with all my soul, with all my might.

The sting, our hardships, can become the tools of sanctification. It says in the Word of God:

[2 Peter 3:18 NKJV]

but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen.

And we can grow through some of our trials and testings. And God allowed me to go through that, but He was there. He was holding my hand. Oh, God is so true. Hardships, they come. The sting of hardships can become the tool of sanctification. I like that. I borrowed that—that's not mine. I borrowed that from some commentary somewhere, but I believe it. It's biblical. It's biblical. Stings of hardship can become the tools. I want to be like Christ. Oh, I want to be like Christ.

Every Christian encounters painful experiences. We all do. For instance, disappointments, how about losses? How about persecutions? How about unanswered questions? The same Lord who led Israel through the desert, through the scorpion-infested desert land, led His people through life's painful seasons.

Are you going through a season of pain? Take it to the Lord in prayer. If you're from this assembly, talk to some of the men or the women here that you know are born again, are Christians, and they love the Lord. Confess it to the Lord. He'll help you through these

difficult times. "Teach me, Lord, what You want me to do." That's what I want to say. Thank You.

Instead of asking, "Why am I going through this?", ask, "Lord, what are You teaching me through this?" Endurance! Endurance produces spiritual maturity. Many of God's strongest servants were developed in difficult times—difficult times.

3. Dominion We Must Exercise

Last one, time is gone: dominion. Scorpions teach us about the dominion we may experience. David faced a giant; in God's strength, he prevailed. I mean, let's look at it. Think of David: little David, a lot of giants, David and Goliath. What an example of having victory over a big scorpion! Two scorpions are not specifically mentioned—enemy! David faced a terrible enemy, but trusted God's power rather than his own strength. He walked in God's authority with his head high, and all the other Israelites with their head down—pity parties! But no, David stood in the name of God, and he overcame the great scorpion, Goliath, and we can do the same thing through Him.

How about this one?

[Luke 10:19 NKJV]

Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you.

Scorpions are represented as spiritual opposition and demon power. Christ's followers do not live in fear; they live in victory! Victory in Jesus! Victory in Jesus! I love that song. If I could sing, you'd have to endure it, but I can't, so I won't. Victory in Jesus! It's so true, so biblical: victory.

The Christian life is not merely survival; it's spiritual victory. I'm not going to get emotional, but I do, because I'm so glad Jesus saved me. And if you don't have victory in your life, Jesus will give it to you. He wants you to be victorious. He wants you to be able to squash that terrible, terrible scorpion: sin! God wants you, and He wants me, to have victory. We overcome through prayer. Don't forget the prayer meetings! God's Word—read it every day. You can overcome. You can overcome by prayer, faith.

[Romans 10:17 NKJV]

So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

Get into the Word of God, eat the Word of God, saturate your life with the Word of God, and impregnate your whole being with the Word of God! Then you'll have victory. Then God will bring that verse to memory just when you need it. God will give you that thought from the Word of God. That's faith! The Holy Spirit is real, dependency on Christ. The enemy may sting, but he can't defeat a believer who walks closely with the Lord, has victory, and that's what it's all about.

Are you living in fear of spiritual opposition, or are you standing confidently in Christ's authority? Spiritual growth, spiritual maturity comes when we learn to trust Christ's power more than our own abilities.

[Philippians 4:13 NKJV]

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

What a truth! What a belief! I can't do nothing by myself. I hear some people say, "Well, we're just nothing." But we are of great value because Jesus died for you and me. God loved you so much that He gave His Son. It says in the Bible:

[John 3:16 NKJV]

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

I'm not going to run away after the service. There is a meeting downstairs; please go. But if you haven't accepted Jesus in your life, I would love to talk to you. You don't even have to go across the street to Starbucks and pay for a coffee. I had a wonderful coffee downstairs during coffee break, but just come up. Don't be afraid. I'm transparent; I'm open. I told you: I've been stung this week. I haven't slept this week. I've cried this week. But God's been with me, and God enabled me to be here this morning. And God wants to do the same thing for you. Leave your heavy burdens at the cross.

Father God, thank You once again for these people. We thank You for each visitor here, and we pray for the 16th, and we thank You for all the different activities. We pray for the DVBS that's coming up; we pray as they plan and strategize. And I pray, Heavenly Father, if there's anybody in this congregation that hasn't come to You, that don't know You in a real personal way, that they will say, "Yes, I want to speak to that loudmouth. I want to speak to that guy. He seems excited about what he's talking about." And yes, Lord, I am excited! I am thrilled what You can do to other people.

Father, I thank You for the people of Skid Row, Union Gospel Mission, Southern Mission, Harbour Light Mission on the streets of Vancouver who have come to You and have been transformed into good citizens, heavenly bound. And as our young brother said, "What a wonderful time it'll be in heaven." And I want everybody in this room to be a part of going to heaven together.

And we thank You, Heavenly Father, that believing on the Lord Jesus Christ, we will be saved. We ask You these things, giving You thanks in Jesus' precious and holy name, amen.