



“Signs of the Times”

INTRODUCTION

We live in a world full of signs that warn of danger, point us in a specific direction or tell us what to do. Some provide instructions that assume we are complete idiots. How about the warning not to put a plastic bag over your head? Some of you thought this sermon might be about the signs of the end times. Not where I am going. I have wanted to preach a message on the numerous Biblical instructions that remind me of traffic signs. Out of numerous possibilities, I chose to settle on seven. That’s a good number. It is sometimes considered the number of completeness in the Bible.



1. One Way

I start with one of the most important signs. Jesus himself made a bold declaration found in John 14. *Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.*

He again proclaimed...

Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. John 10:7-10

Scripture reinforces this truth through over and over.

*Jesus came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. For **through him** we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. Ephesians 2:17-18*

There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved. Acts 4:12

For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time. 1 Timothy 2:5-6

Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him. John 3:36

salvation, restored relationship with the father, eternal life, abundant life are only found a relationship with Jesus Christ. He is the only way! He is the one way! Contrary to this world’s current teaching, there are not many paths to God. There may be many paths to Jesus Christ but He is the only authorized path to God.



2. Yield

We are all familiar with this sign. It instructs us to yield our movement to other traffic. Scripture commands submission in other areas, but submission to Him is foremost. God expects and deserves complete yielding of ourselves to God.

God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Submit (yield) yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you. James 4:6-8

Peter issued the same instruction.

Be humbled therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time He may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on Him, because He cares for you. 1 Peter 5:6-7

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Romans 12:1

Paul instructed the Romans to yield themselves and their “members” for God’s use. I believe this dealt with more than a specific body part of limb but the referred to vast capabilities possible through the creative application of the mind/body connection.

Consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. Do not present (yield) your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present (yield) yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. Romans 6:11-13

The term “instrument” described a useful tool, especially an offensive weapon against the enemy. Paul first reminded them that Christ brought them new life capable of freedom from sin and Satan. Considering that fact, he urged them to stop allowing sin to continue its rule over their physiological aspects. I.e. Physical capacities, urges, appetites, mental and emotional patterns programed contrary to God’s ways. He told them to stop consciously yielding their “members” to sin as a weapon for the opposing army. In contrast, they were to consciously yield themselves (their core being) to God, given that God brought them out of death to life, and then yield up their members and all their capacity as tools for righteousness.

The transformed living of a child of God is one of the most powerful weapons against the corrupting purposes of Satan in this world. Are we allowing the corrupt passions still imbedded in our physical body to dictate our actions or have we consciously yielded even our body to God’s use, given the fact He has instilled His life in the core of our being?



3. Caution

The Bible offers numerous cautions in life.

Beware lest there be among you a man or woman or clan or tribe whose heart is turning away today from the LORD our God to go and serve the gods of those nations. Beware lest there be among you a root bearing poisonous and bitter fruit, one who, when he hears the words of this sworn covenant, blesses himself in his heart, saying, ‘I shall be safe, though I walk in the stubbornness of my heart.’ This will lead to the sweeping away of moist and dry alike (everything). Deuteronomy 29:18-19

Beware of turning against God. Beware of ignoring God’s involvement in your life.

Beware lest you say in your heart, ‘My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth.’ You shall remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth, that he may confirm his covenant that he swore to your fathers, as it is this day. Deuteronomy 8:17-18

Beware of pride

Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. Matthew 6:1

Let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall. 1 Corinthians 10:12

Beware of false teaching

‘Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. Matthew 7:15

Beware of legalism

Jesus said to them, ‘Watch and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.’ Matthew 16:6

In Philippians Paul warned them to look out for the Judaizers.

Beware of drifting from the truth

Therefore (since Jesus is God's ultimate spokesman) we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. Hebrews 2:1

Beware of a hardened, unbelieving.

Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. Hebrews 3:12-13

Paul warned the Corinthians not to fall into the same traps as the Israelites did.

For I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ. Nevertheless, with most of them God was not pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did. 1

Corinthians 10:1-7

He then recounted their sin. Fleshly desires, idolatry, sexual immorality, testing God, grumbling against God.

He then promised that God would provide a way to avoid these things. Jesus warned the disciples to "watch and pray" to avoid temptation.

Beware of your walk

Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil. Ephesians 5:15-16

Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. Matthew 26:41



4. Stop

The most recognizable road sign is the stop sign. Whereas the traffic sign requires a complete stop before proceeding, the Biblical stop signs assume you don't resume the behavior it calls us to stop. God's instruction to stop an action you are currently engaged in is not always expressed in the English. It is a grammatical form in the Greek translated as a command to stop doing what you are doing. The command to stop a destructive or harmful behavior fills the

Bible. We encountered several of them in our study of Philippians.

Stop looking out only for your own interests. 2:4

Stop being anxious 4:6

Stop letting the sun go down on your anger Eph 4:26

Stop giving the devil an opportunity by your bitterness Eph 4:27

Stop letting hurtful words come out of your mouth. Eph 4:29

Stop grieving the Holy Spirit by your ill-treatment of one another. 4:30

Stop being foolish. Eph 5:17

Stop letting your hearts be troubled John 14:1

Stop cursing those who persecute you. Rom 12:14

Stop being proud Rom 12:16

Stop being overcome with evil. Rom 12:21

You get the idea. Any command in the negative could be views as a command to "knock it off" stop.



5. Slow

The Hebrew word for "slow" almost exclusively appears with one thing – Anger. The Bible celebrates Slowness to anger as a prime attribute of God. When Moses asked to have a glimpse of the glory of God, God announce the conditions required to answer such a bold request. He would have to be specially protected by God in the rocks with God's hand of protection.

God promise to allow the glory of His goodness to pass over Him. Once He passed over, He would allow Moses to see the residue of His glory. The manifestation of God’s glory came in the form of a cloud and declaration.

*The LORD descended in the cloud and stood there with him as he called upon the name of the LORD. Then the LORD passed by in front of him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, **slow to anger**, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations." Ex 34:5-7*

This comforting attribute can be found eight more times in the Old Testament. He doesn’t say He never gets angry. It declares it takes considerable provoking to manifest. Be sure there is plenty of examples of God’s expressed anger in the Bible. Since God is slow to anger, it would logically follow that such an attribute would be expected in those created in His image.

He who is slow to anger has great understanding, But he who is quick-tempered exalts folly. A tranquil heart is life to the body, But passion is rottenness to the bones. Proverbs 14:29-30

A hot-tempered man stirs up strife, But the slow to anger calms a dispute. Proverbs 15:18

He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit, than he who captures a city. Proverbs 16:32

A man's discretion makes him slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook a transgression. Proverbs 19:11
It seems one of the keys to the speed of anger deals with discretion, wisdom, understanding. Sometimes angry emotions bypass the conscious brain. The key is to seek for greater perception. Often times anger dissolves when perception enters the equation.

James posted a “slow” sign regarding anger.

Everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger; for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God. James 1:19-20

James also calls us to listen more than we speak. That may in itself avoid anger. There is a place for anger. God responds to evil with anger. We need to differentiate between man-centered anger and God-centered anger. Paul helps balance our consideration of the subject.

BE ANGRY, AND yet DO NOT SIN; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not give the devil a place. Ephesians 4:26-27

Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you. Ephesians 4:31-32

Consider installing some “slow” signs in your life when it comes to anger.



6. No Trespassing – Do Not Enter



To trespass is to go where I have been prohibited from going.

“Don’t even go there!” Adam’s first sin was a “trespass”. Up to that point he, by nature, functioned exactly as God had designed. He lived in conformity with God’s desires and enjoyed unhindered fellowship with God. By his own choice, although influenced greatly by the manipulation of Satan, chose to eat of the one fruit God told him not to eat. Since then, we have all trespassed God’s prohibited territory. We have also failed to live up to God’s expectations.

Therefore, as Paul clearly stated in his letter to the Ephesians... (2:1-2

And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience

Satan is still influencing humanity to violate God's "no Trespassing", "do not enter" signs. The consequences are unescapable. The should that sins will die. The wages of sin is death. It is appointed unto man to die once and then face God's righteous judgment.



7. Bump

Occasionally, especially in construction zones, you will find a "bump" sign. That means, you are about to encounter a bumpy ride. Jesus was crystal clear.

"These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world." John 16:33

There are going to be BUMPS in the road. You may consider other signs like Falling rocks, steep grade, curves ahead. Paul strengthened the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying...

Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God." Acts 14:2

Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. 2 Timothy 3:12

Along with persecution comes the suffering associated with living in a broken world still ruled by enemy of our soul.

Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world. After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you. To Him be dominion forever and ever. Amen. 1 Peter 5:8-11

Anyone who tries to teach you otherwise is probably trying to sell you something. It is "snake oil". It is a false teaching. It runs contrary to the scriptures. The disillusioned victims of such volatile teaching can be found everywhere. God calls Christians everywhere to be prepared to suffer for His name sake.

For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, experiencing the same conflict which you saw in me, and now hear to be in me. Philippians 1:29-30

Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation. 1 Peter 4:12-13

No matter your views on the Great Tribulation, there is no guarantee the Christian will escape possible great tribulation. Just ask the Syrian Christians or the Iraqi Christians.

Open Doors ministry reports that...

322 Christians are being killed every month.

214 Churches and Christian properties are destroyed every month.

772 forms of violence are committed against Christians every month.

CONCLUSION

Signs are important. Any time you choose to ignore a sign you do so to your peril. That fact is especially true whenever we choose to ignore God's clear signs. The Bible is full of signs.

Now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require from you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and love Him, and to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the LORD'S commandments and His statutes which I am commanding you today for your good? Deut 10:12-13

Pay attention to the signs in the Bible!!