

# K-026 I Love the lord...but

by Art Katz

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*The sermon highlights the problem of sin, its consequences, and the importance of true repentance, using the example of Solomon to illustrate the danger of one little defect and one little flaw.*

**Duration:** 50:33

**Scripture:** Psalm 119:1, Isaiah 1:21, Matthew 6:33, Matthew 26:69-75, Acts 2:3-4, Hebrews 10:31, James 2:10

**Topics:** "Surrender"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker reflects on the story of Peter's denial of Jesus and the disciples' failure to stand firm in their faith. He then transitions to discussing the first chapter of Isaiah, which he describes as a melancholy chapter. The speaker emphasizes the importance of remaining obedient to God and not deviating from His commands. He uses the metaphor of wine turning to water to illustrate the spiritual decline of the people of Israel. The sermon concludes with a call to embrace the cross of Christ as the only solution to restore righteousness and faithfulness.

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## Transcript

When God sets the mood, He also sets the content. And I've been waiting for the content to well up in my heart. There's only been one persistent theme, and I said, Oh Lord, that, no, it can't be that one.

That's for an unsaved audience. This is going to be a peculiar night, people. I'm going to take my sweater off now.

Bless the Lord. You think it's a groovy thing to be a minister of the Lord? Huh? Let's bow our heads and join our hearts together. That not a single iota of the living God's intention shall fall to the ground this night.

However foolish He would make us, however absurd would we think His theme, His speaking, but only let it be His, and give us hearts to receive and to do it. Oh, precious God, Lord. That is already our prayer, mighty God.

I am mortified, Lord, for I should be the last one to be a mouth to such speakings, precious God. Chief of the sinners, precious God, I ask You even now, Lord, in this last moment, that You'll do that miraculous thing of which You're completely capable, to change the mood, to change the content. But if this be You, precious God, give us hearts, Lord, to hear You and to receive it.

Wholly possessed this mouth, I have never asked it of You more earnestly than I do now, Lord. That this people might know, and that I might know, beyond doubt, that it is the mighty God who has spoken. Shape every syllable of utterance, and so charge it with Your Spirit and Your life, that there can be no doubt.

Have Your way with us and redeem this night utterly. We thank You and praise You now, Lord, for hearing this prayer and for giving the answer, because we ask it in Yeshua's holy name. Thank You, Lord.

Hallelujah. Unlike my usual practice, I drove to these meetings. Somehow we came into the possession of a 67 Chrysler, an Imperial.

In fact, our little community up in northern Minnesota is beginning to look like a used car lot. Someone gave us two weeks ago a Cadillac, and I guess God is wanting to embarrass me, who has heard me deprecate possessions like that all my life long. The only redeeming thing is that they are 1967 models with 80, 90 or 100 or more thousand miles upon them.

Yet, nevertheless, it's a real mitzvah to drive such a car. It's a blessing. I'll tell you, there were times I hardly felt that the wheels were on the ground.

And today, as we were cruising from Oregon down here, and I say cruising, I'm a supremely confident driver. Well, after all, I've had about 30 years experience. My brother said to me, Why do you speed? And my first instinctive, defensive retort was, You call that speeding? I was only doing about 63, 65.

I don't call that speeding. Man, I could handle those roads at 85, 90 with one finger. Call that speeding? And then he went on to say something about how the Lord had chastised him when the speed laws had been changed and he had been accustomed to the higher speeds.

You know what I was thinking to myself? I don't determine my speed by what it says on that black and white sign. I determine my speed by the condition of the car, the condition of the road, my own condition, my experience, my expertise. And those of you who love driving or play ping pong or know how it is when you enter into a flow of things, you know what I mean? I was almost like in a jet stream.

It was the perfect speed for the condition, the car, and the driver. The only thing was it was about 10 miles over the limit. But what is that anyway? And that's how this message tonight was born.

Not too long ago in the same car, before I went overseas, we had our family night, and I took the family into town for a hamburger. That's how we have family night. And as we were driving home, I heard some cracking of gum in the backseat.

It wasn't cracking. It was even a little bit more sickening than that. It was real chomping and sucking and all the kind of sounds that want to drive you up a wall.

And I blurted out, still without turning my head, I said, Who's chewing gum? Silence. The sound dissipated and I forgot the issue and I drove on. And sure enough, within five minutes, I said, Who's chewing gum? Not a sound.

And I looked up in my mirror. I can see my oldest son's jaws going up and down. David, are you chewing gum? No, he said.

I'm only holding it in my mouth. That's daddy's little boy. I said, Well, spit it out.

And I drove on with righteous indignation. And sure enough, within five minutes, Didn't I tell you to spit it out? Well, he said, I thought if I didn't chew it and just held it, it would be the same. What do you think, children, of that scripture in James that says, If you're guilty in one point of the law, you're guilty in all.

What do you think of the scripture? And what do you think of a strange occasion like this, when I don't know when I brought this little notebook with me to a speaking engagement. I don't think I've ever used it. Maybe once or twice.

There are a lot of things in here I've never spoken from. It was my notebook that I used in Denmark when I was holed up in exile and had occasion to think and to dwell upon many things. And for some reason, I just threw it in my suitcase this time and I was looking at it and I had kind of a fever, that speakers know before a meeting, when you don't know what you're going to speak, but you're in the worst possible mood.

And what do you think is on the first page? Whosoever shall keep the whole law and yet offend in one point is guilty of all. I think there's a scripture in the first verse of the 119th Psalm that says, Blessed are they who walk undefiled in the way. I've always wondered what point it was that God was making about being guilty in one point.

Because don't we come from the batting average society? Listen, if you come up to bat ten times and you get three hits, you're a candidate for the Hall of Fame. So if you just miss one point, what's that? One minor infraction, what's that? After all, as you survey the substance of your life and your general character, there's not much fault to be found. What is one little violation? But there's a writer by the name of Finney who made a great deal over that scripture.

And would to God that he would raise up Finneys for our own generation. Quite a difference from the kind of ministries men like that had than what we see now that is commonly called evangelism, where we plead with people to accept Jesus. Doesn't that turn your stomach? There was no such pleading in his day.

Rather, men clutched to the pillars of the churches and auditoriums where he spoke, lest they lose their grip and slip right into an all-consuming hell. Men felt flames licking at the soles of their feet, fearful lest the floor open up and swallow them. There are descriptions of men falling out of their seats, onto their faces, into the aisleways during his meetings.

And he was not quick to rush to console them. Men were carried out of the meetings in condition like that and languished in that condition for three days until they broke into the dimension of God forever. Whole communities were transformed.

Jails were emptied out. Saloons were closed when Finney came to town. So I don't know now if I'm quoting from him or these are my reflections that I had in reading about Finney's comment on this one scripture.

I just want to read it to you, okay? Sin is selfishness and always puts self-interest and self-gratification before obedience to God. Though it be expressed in only one instance, a character quirk, a defect, we call it. Notice how we generalize and rationalize.

That's just my poisonality, as we say in Brooklyn. Yet it reveals the heart's basic disposition toward self-love and toward pleasing self rather than God, revealing that we do not love him with all our heart, all our soul, all our mind and strength, thus breaking the first commandment continually. The text in James shows the impossibility of real obedience in one thing and of persistent disobedience in another at the

same time.

Can we obey God in the spirit of obedience in some things and at the same time withhold it in others? Disobedience in one point is wholly inconsistent with true obedience. For if obedience to God be real in anything, it must extend to everything known to be the will of God. Therefore, a single sin, small, inconsequential, hidden, constitutes a real rejection of God's whole authority.

Though the person might appear to obey in other things, for having cast aside the authority of God in this one area, he has really rejected it wholly and obeys in other instances, therefore out of a wrong motive because he has no supreme respect for God's authority. How many of us are cruising along at 65 miles an hour because it's groovy? Man, we're just in a jet stream and it just is a happy coming together of a car, its power, skill, condition. We're a law unto ourselves in that one particular and therefore in all.

We've deceived ourselves by thinking that because we've been obedient in many things that somehow we have not set ourselves above the Most High. But I'll tell you that our obedience was only in most part the happy coincidence that we agreed with Him in most things. But there'll come a point when you'll disagree when you'll be obedient then.

It says any form of sin persisted in is fatal because it is inconsistent with true repentance. For real repentance is the heart renunciation of all sin because it is abomination to God because He hates it. It is the turning of the heart from self-seeking to supreme love to God.

So long as one form of sin is indulged in, persisted in, not given up, we are preferring ourself to the will of God. There can be no true repentance until all known sin be utterly abandoned. If any form of preferring self to God be persisted in, no sin has been truly abandoned.

God is not supremely loved. Self is preferred to God. I think of the utter humiliation which the Lord at times has allowed men to experience who will not believe His Word.

His Word says that there's not a righteous man upon the earth that doeth good and sinneth not. And if God were to mark iniquity, who can stand? And how many of us applaud those scriptures and have quoted them to others and given assent ourselves, but in our secret and hidden heart we believe that though that might be true for a multitude, our own relationship with the Lord is based on something altogether different. Somehow He's found us more fetching.

And He loves us because of our talent or because of our innate spirituality or because we're intense seekers after truth long before we knew Him. And therefore He saw a perfect heart and brought us to the knowledge of Himself. And though we accede to the doctrines on sin, we've never in our hearts been branded to feel that we ourselves are one.

I think someone has wisely said that if we will not acknowledge the terror of sin, the depravity of sin, God will have to show it to us in our humiliation. Isn't that what happened to the disciples on Pesach night, on the Passover, after the supper with the Lord? Their brave declaration was still ringing, Yea, though all the world deny you, yet will we never deny you. And within a matter of hours they had fled in the most pathetic panic, one of them even fleeing naked.

And the greatest hot shot of them all, Peter, who was the loudest in his declaration, was the one who was most utterly humiliated when the Lord fixed His eye upon him after He had denied him with oaths and with cursings before the cock crowed. I want you to turn with me tonight. I don't know how this text fits in, but I

simply cannot consider anything else.

It's the first chapter of Isaiah. I can't think of a more melancholy chapter in all the scripture than this first chapter of Isaiah. What a cry of God, what a lament.

I think I would to God that if I had my choice for my Jewish people to consider any portion of scripture that they might consider this. Let's see if we can understand what God is saying through the mouth of this prophet. The vision of Isaiah, the son of Amos, which he saw concerning Judah, the kingdom and Jerusalem, the capital city, and the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah, kings of Judah.

Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth. For the Lord hath spoken. I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me.

The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib. What Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider. Our sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupt, as they have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger.

They are gone away backward. Why should you be stricken anymore? You will revolt more and more. The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint.

From the sole of the foot, even unto the head, there is no soundness in it but wounds and bruises and putrefying sores. They have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment. Your country is desolate.

Your cities are burned with fire. Your land, strange, is devoured in your presence, and it is desolate, as overthrown by strangers. And the daughter of Zion is left as a cottage in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a beseeched city.

Except the Lord of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant. We should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah. Hear the word of the Lord, you rulers of Sodom.

Give ear unto the law of our God, you people of Gomorrah. To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me, saith the Lord? I am full of the burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fed beasts, and I delight not in the blood of bullocks or of lambs or of he-goats. When you come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations, incenses and abomination unto me.

The new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with it. It is iniquity, even the solemn meetings. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth.

They are a trouble unto me, and I am weary to bear them. I do not even know how to make comment about such a text as this, except that the cry of God from the beginning pierces the soul, because God has to appeal to dumb elements to hear. Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth.

Why does God have to reduce his call to the basic, naked, inert, senseless elements? Because men will not hear. And then he goes on to compare Israel with dumb brute beasts. The most brute beast, an ox knows its owner and asks its master's crib, but Israel doth not know, and my people do not consider.

And then he goes on to call them a sinful nation, the seed of evildoers. And notice he says, children that are corruptors. He doesn't say corrupted, but children themselves that are corruptors.

Because I tell you that it's not long, once you allow yourself to become corrupted, that you become a corruptor of others. And to our unfortunate history as Jews, I think that we have to acknowledge that we have been primed in the earth as corruptors. I don't just mean to call Marxists and the avant-garde leaders in psychology and fields like that, but revolution, insurrection, rebellion, student uprisings, pornography, and all the rest.

It's not long before people who are corrupted themselves become corruptors. They have forsaken the Lord. And then he goes on to describe their condition, that there's no soundness from the sole of the foot even to the head, wounds and bruises and sores.

But you know what, children? This was not the actual, physical, literal condition of Israel when the prophet Isaiah spoke it. If they had looked at themselves, they would have wondered, what is that madman speaking? Why, we're dressed in the most beautiful of gowns and garments, we're scrubbed and cleansed and perfumed and powdered and pampered. There's nothing, there's no defect to be found in us.

And what is this man raving about? The same thing is true also of the city. He says, your country is desolate, your cities are burned with fire. That wasn't true of Israel in the time that he spoke this.

Their temple was at its zenith. Traditional worship was continued. There was a priesthood.

Everything which God established was in its place. And the very things which God deprecates, who has called you to trample my courts? He did. None of these things that he's rebuking them for were man-made.

They were all divine ordinances, all temple practices. The new moons and the Sabbaths were not invented by men. They were prescribed in the scripture, and yet God says of it, it is a stench in my nostrils.

What are we to make of this? Some Jewish people have said that the New Testament is anti-Semitic, because it says some strong things about Jews. And someone has wisely said, have you read Isaiah lately? But this is not a case against Jews per se. This is a case against a religious people who are doing everything properly and correctly, even the things prescribed of God, who give no appearance of anything but soundness and wholeness, and yet to the eye of the prophet he sees bruises and putrefying sores that need to be bound up.

He sees a city and a country devastated and desolate. He sees them abandoned. Why is it that God said, I am weary to bear your feasts, my soul hateth.

Bring no more vain oblations. Although these were the things that he himself required, because while they continued in all of the prescribed things, and no one could fault their fastidiousness in maintaining their Judaism, yet had their heart departed from the Lord, and these things were being carried on in a mechanical way, while the hearts of the people went whoring after other gods. This is a fantastic phenomenon.

I was reminded of Solomon tonight as I was contemplating these things, how God speaks of Solomon in 1 Kings 3. He said that he loved the Lord with all his heart, but he burned incense in the high places. He only had one defect, one flaw. He loved God with all his heart.

Isn't that what we're so prone to say? We can't say anything else good about a believer. We say he really loves the Lord, but he burns incense in high places. And before we've turned to chapters, eight of them,

we find that this one, who was the embodiment of the wisdom of God, unparalleled in such a way as it was a wonder of the world, had a thousand wives and concubines taken from all of the pagan nations, of whom God said, Thou shalt not marry with the women of the land.

And not only did he take these wives, but they turned his heart, and in the end he had built them places of worship, high places, and sacrificed unto pagan gods, and the Lord had to take from him the kingdom. It all began with one little defect and one little flaw. Solomon loved the Lord, but he burned incense in high places.

I suppose that the Jewish people who had heard this thing pouring out of the mouth of Isaiah must have thought him mad. As a matter of fact, we know that prophets are not usually given warm receptions. They don't always speak the things that are pleasing to be heard.

Jesus said, You have slain, or stoned, all the prophets that were sent unto you. But they see by the eye of God as men themselves do not see. And it's a cry and it's a warning which we know that Israel did not heed because everything that the prophets saw later came to pass.

Their country was left unto them desolate. They were like a besieged city. I've had the opportunity recently to be overseas, and everywhere I go, I try to seek out some remnant of my own Jewish people.

No matter what is my task or what meetings or conference, what remote Yugoslavian town or village, I always ask and seek to find if there's but one Jewish family there, and I usually find them. In a particular place where I was a speaker at a conference of ministers, I was told of an abandoned synagogue, and I went. And I'll tell you, children, I've not yet recovered from that visit.

Have you ever visited an abandoned synagogue? It'll take the heart right out of your body. The electric lights had long ceased to work, wires hanging loose, bird droppings over the pews, holes in the ceiling, plaster hanging down in sheets, loose bricks, creaking floors, musty stink, not having been occupied. And I cried, where were the Jews of that community? No more.

And I walked up in that half-darkness, and I groped my way, and I went up on the platform, and I opened up the ark. There was the tattered curtain behind which should be the Torah, the law of God, the scrolls. And I opened up, pushed aside that tattered curtain, and it was vacant.

I felt something like a surgeon who was operating on the body to find when he opened up the chest cavity and reached in, there was no heart. And something spoke in my spirit in that moment. Your house shall be left to you desolate.

I was stunned by that experience, and I came back that night for the last of these concluding meetings, looking at an audience of ministers who would not be reconciled to each other. The most significant denomination in that nation, Pentecostal brethren, torn, rent, divided, fragmented, jealous, bitter, suspicious, envious, mistrusting. And I had no prepared message but the experience in the synagogue, just as I had no prepared message for tonight, just going a little past the speed limit.

And God cried out of my mouth to these men, if you'll not build the house of God, if you'll not be reconciled to one another, deeply and truly reconciled, if you'll not put aside your bitterness and resentments and jealousies and envies, and be one, your house shall be left to you desolate. It'll be just as macabre, just as melancholy as that abandoned Jewish synagogue with the plaster hanging in sheets and the loose bricks and the creaking floors. You wonder how it is that Israel could have left its high eminence and its glory and

come to such a melancholy thing as we have seen in our own generation.

And I think there's some clue to that in this same first chapter. It says in the 21st verse, How is the faithful city become a harlot? It was full of judgment, righteousness lodged in it, but now murderers. Isn't that an interesting phenomenon? How does Jerusalem, the holy city, become a city of murderers and a city of whores? And I tell you what, children, it's not done in a day, but there's a gradual, quiet, unseen, almost invisible, little bit of corrosion, a little edging and chipping away, a little minor deflection, small sins that continue to grow in volume and take its toll until you wake one day to find there's not a righteous man in the entire city and God equates Jerusalem with Sodom and Gomorrah.

I'll tell you that we ought to take pause because if it pleases God to do this to the natural branches, what shall we say of His church? I was just made conscious that as I took it in my own hands to adjust my own speed in the light of my own wisdom and my own understanding, contrary to what was posted by the authorities, I had become in that instance a law unto myself. Although the word is clear, submit to the authorities that are over you. I determined my course by my own human reckoning and judgment of what I thought was right in the light of the conditions, the ability of the car, and my expertise.

I was filled with righteous indignation at a son in the backseat who continued to crack and suck his gum and said, I'm not chewing it, I'm just holding it in my mouth, only to find with consternation and embarrassment I was guilty of the same kind of rationalization and self-defense and exactly the same kind of violation of what my father had spoken to me. To call ourselves Christians in this condition is to reveal what is cheap grace and believe and have a shoddy, grossly inadequate view of God, His Christ, His cross, and the atonement we really hold in our hearts despite the correct doctrines we uphold with our mouths. We give assent to these right things, but our life and our little violations reveal something else.

Finney writes, most of us render only a very partial obedience to God, picking and choosing among the commandments and obeying those which cost us little to obey, while we do not hesitate habitually to disobey where obedience would subject us to any inconvenience or require from us self-denial or expose us to persecution. That's a tremendous statement, and it bears hearing again. Most of us render only a very partial obedience to God.

And I guess in the light of what the scripture says in James, partial obedience is really, in the last analysis, no obedience at all. If we so much as stand in judgment over one particular of God's requirement for our lives, we have elevated ourselves in that instance higher than the most high. And though we agree in 99 out of 100 things of what He requires of us, and disobey in that one, we have revealed the real condition of our heart, our naked selfishness, and our self-exaltation above God.

We love God with all our hearts, but most of us render only a very partial obedience to God, picking and choosing among the commandments, obeying those which it costs us little to obey, while we do not hesitate habitually to disobey where obedience would subject us to any inconvenience or require self-denial or expose us to persecution. The same hotshots that cried out, yea, though all the world deny you, yet will I never, when the moment of persecution was upon them, fled in sheer terror and panic. You say, Art, I didn't think that I was of the stature of a Peter or a John.

What then shall be my fate when a dark hour of trial shall come upon me and shall reveal my inadequacy? What's the answer and what's the defense against these areas in our lives in which we are vulnerable? For you it was speeding and for your son it was cracking gum, but I could think of things in my own life where I've made exceptions to God's requirement and counted it a small thing, not significant. And yet I

know if I persist in it, the end will be for me as it was for Solomon. God will lend from me his kingdom.

There's only one answer, children, and we pray about it as we do about sin, and it's called the cross. After eleven years as a believer and eight years in full-time ministry, I have not yet learned or understood or found a way to communicate to those to whom God brings me what it is that that cross means. There's probably never been an hour when there's been more junk jewelry made, more crosses, more things dangling around necks and over ears and on suction cups of cars, on dashboards and church decoration and all the rest in this hour.

And there's never been a generation who has understood the cross less. I'm quoting now from Tozer. Some of you will remember this great saint.

I believe he was a prophet. He says, The real cross is a symbol of death. It stands for the abrupt, violent end of a human being.

The man in Roman times who took up his cross and started down the road had already said goodbye to his friends. He was not coming back. He was going out to have it ended.

The cross made no compromise, modified nothing, spared nothing. It flew all of the man completely and for good. It did not try to keep on good terms with its victim.

It struck cruel and hard and when it had finished its work, that man was no more. There's only one answer to an egotistical outcast who determines on the basis of his competence and experience that he can exalt himself above the prescribed speed limit and that is to be struck down at the heart of its vanity and pride, though you might count that a small thing. There's a cross, a place to which God bids us come, which is the only answer of loving the Lord with all our heart, but building altars in high places, exceeding the speed limit, holding gum in our mouths and calling that not chewing and all of the host of violations and affronts to God which characterize all of our lives.

Which, though we are enjoying the holy city today, will, if we continue, make it a city of whores and of murderers, because if God did not withhold that from Israel, how shall we ourselves be exempt? There's a fantastic scripture right following the verse that I've just quoted, the 22nd verse. It says, Thy silver is become dross, thy wine mixed with water. And maybe you can't appreciate that so much, not being Jewish, but I can tell you that wine is extremely important in Jewish life, not just sacramentally or on the Passover, but on the Sabbath, on the Shabbat.

Wine, when we lift that glass, the Hebrew word immediately comes to heart. Lechayim, we say, to life. Wine is like the exsula of life.

It's a strange kind of a thing. It has a certain kind of potency. There's something about it.

When we pop that cork, there's an expectation. I'm not talking about sloppy drunkenness. I'm talking about sensible appreciation of something precious that God has afforded for our joy.

And one who really appreciates it and knows the care with which wine has been produced is not quick to slop it down and to quaff his mouth and wipe it on the back of his hand. Rather, he holds the bottle to the light and examines it and is moved by the rich color. That doesn't seem to be anything else.

It quite has it. And when he removes that cork and pours something in the glass, he'll smell the bouquet. There are things that are preliminary to drinking.

We're the Pepsi-Cola age and Kool-Aid and all of that jazz. It's just something to slack off first and we haven't enjoyed all that is richly meant in wine. I just came back from another trip overseas and you can't believe what God performed in those weeks.

The uniqueness and the originality of God's speakings. Without preparation, without meditation, thrown from one situation to another, one group. American army chapels, Bible colleges, Pentecostal churches, Baptists, university encounters with radical atheists.

God was instant, in season and out. But I came to a certain kind of American place in Holland, a kind of a youth work. And I didn't know what to speak as is my usual case.

And just before I was to come, I had about five minutes, something stirred in my heart about that episode in Numbers where Phineas, the son of the priest, took a javelin and drove it right through an Israelite who was fornicating with a Midianite woman in the camp. Do you remember that episode? And it says on the basis of that act, God made with that man an everlasting covenant and stayed from Israel a plague. I had never before spoken on it.

I thought it wildly irrelevant to the situation that I was in. I couldn't see its appropriateness. And I came waiting for the Lord to change the signal, the mood, the message, but He did not.

And finally in obedience, yea, though He slay me, yet will I trust Him. I opened up my Bible. I said, if you forgive me, kids, I don't understand this, but I think that I'm being required to read this, never having before spoken on it.

I was looking out on an audience of guys with hair down their backs, and I noticed the frequency of gold earrings in one ear. I thought, well, this is a new style. I've not seen this in the charismatic movement before.

A little appendage, a little stylistic affectation, quite groovy and colorful, gypsy looking. And I went on to read those scriptures. And before that hour was through, God had taken the javelin and driven it through the Israelites who were fornicating with a Midianite woman.

Things had crept into the camp, and the Midianite wives were prevailing, and they knew it not. You can't believe the defensiveness of those kids. They got so excited and angry with me.

You're legalistic, cats! And you're just looking at the outward man. God looks on the heart. I said, what are you getting so defensive about it, if it means nothing? Does it mean nothing to you? Could you just as easily remove it and cut your hair, take the earring out? Yeah, it doesn't mean anything.

I said, how do you know that? I know my own heart! I thought, that's interesting. I'm 46 years old and have been banged from pillar to post. And I've had 11 years, sometimes, of excruciating experiences and dealings at the hand of the Lord, and I can't say I know my own heart.

And you squirt. You 19, 20 year old squirt. You know your heart, and you know that this affectation style is harmless, and it means nothing.

The city of righteousness did not become a city of murderers in a day. It began with some slight deviation, some slight liberty, which individuals took, thinking that, for the most part, they really loved the Lord, but your silver is turned to dross, and your wine is turned to water. And I can't think of a more pathetic complaint of God to Israel than that their wine is turned to water.

That precious stuff, so rare, so costly in the making, acts of death all the way, the seed dropped into the earth to die, the vine, the plant, the grapes, crudely wrenched off, plucked, crushed, distilled, refined, sifted, poured into bottles, from container to container, buried in a dark place, brought up out of death, that it might be for us life. That when we lift that glass, brilliant color, brilliant bouquet, aroma, we can say, L'chaim, to life. But what is God saying? Your wine is turned to water.

How come? Because as you continued on and lost the quality of my life, you're required to continue to mingle with the original thing, something to make it go as far. You added water. And so it still looks the same, it still appears to be wine, but if you bring it close to your nose or taste it, you're ready to spew it out of your mouth.

That night at that place in Holland, those kids had already said that they were going to invite me to make some remarks over their time of communion, which they had on Saturday nights. Now they were sorry they said it. And guess what they did that night? Not having wine, not having grape juice, they used Kool-Aid.

And guess what the Lord had me say? How appropriate is the Kool-Aid. Your depth of understanding, your brokenness, your need for His atonement, your reception of His blood, your fear to be defiled is as thin and as lifeless and as wishy-washy as the Kool-Aid you're sipping. Jesus lifted a glass of wine at the Passover table in the Last Supper and said, this is my blood poured out as a new covenant for you.

I don't know what I'm doing tonight, children. I think I'm only doing one thing. I'm being obedient.

I don't know how it's sounding, and I'm being instructed out of my own mouth, and I'm not speaking from some Olympian height as some spiritually superior person looking down. But I can say, as I said in my prayer, I'm the chief of sinners. I see in my own small violation the same kind of defect that led to the eventual downfall of a Solomon and indeed a whole Israel.

If you're guilty in one point of the law, you're guilty in all. The only answer is a cross of which Jesus said, if any man would come after me, let him take up his cross and follow me. You know, I never really thought that out before of all the times I've preached on it.

I pictured the man taking up the cross and following after Jesus. But until I read this tonight, I didn't really understand that that man who once picks it up is not going to drag it behind him for all of his religious career. He's picking it up for one purpose only, that he's going to be suspended upon it unto death.

How we've spoken those words glibly, take up your cross and follow me. Yeah, I'm a disciple. The only answer, precious people, to small sins is the cross of Christ Jesus.

The only answer to small infractions is the cross of Christ Jesus. The only alternative to our wine turning to water and the silver of our righteousness turning to dross is the cross of Christ Jesus. There's a fearful, ruthless place of separation and death to which God invites us that we might be a holy, obedient people who love the Lord our God with all our hearts, all our souls, all our might and all our strength and would not so much as ever be able to conceive of the slightest infraction against Him.

My 65 miles an hour was a slap in the face of the living God. It showed a proud and arrogant man calling his own shots whom all the world applauds as an outstanding disciple, an oracle and mouthpiece of God and yet himself guilty of quote and unquote a small infraction. Be assured that if you have not seen it yet, there'll come a time that you've been obedient 99 out of 100.

There'll be that 100th time when if you've not come to this cross wholly laid out your life and given it up, you'll find yourself in an act of rebellion against God. I have raised up children and they have rebelled against me, saith the Lord. The ox knows its owner and the ass its master's crib, but my people, they do not know and they don't even conceive.

The real cross is a symbol of death. It stands for the abrupt, violent end of a human being. The man in Roman times who took up his cross and started down the road had already said goodbye to his friends.

He was not coming back. He was going out to have it ended. The cross made no compromise, modified nothing, spared nothing.

It slew all of the man completely and for good. It did not try to keep on good terms with its victim. It struck cruel and hard and when it had finished its work, the man was no more.

Jesus said, Accept your righteousness to exceed the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees. You can in no wise enter the kingdom of heaven. Have you ever recognized the total impossibility of God's call? Have you ever really understood that his ways are not our ways, nor his thoughts our thoughts? As often as we've sung it, has it really burned your heart that he's holy, holy, holy and he's called us to be a people who is holy as he is holy and perfect as he is perfect? And what must we cry but who is sufficient for these things? We Jews are so proud of our moral stature.

We love to discuss moral and ethical issues. We're the world's greatest moralists and God says it's not sufficient. If we'll come to that cruel cross and take all of our moral propensities with us, though we haven't committed heinous sins and crimes, it's just been a small thing, a hidden thing, a secret thing.

Out of that death will come the resurrection of the perfect Son of the living God. You know what makes the New Covenant new? The one who called us to more than the Ten Commandments is also the one only who can fulfill it. And we shall get out of the way with our small defects and our small failures and our small disobediences and see in that a picture of proud arrogance and self-sufficiency and self-will and self-love for which God has only one answer.

I think that's it. I want you to bow your heads with me. How many of you have heard my confession tonight of exceeding the speed limit by five to ten miles because of the vanity of my own mind and reckoning? Thought to yourself, my goodness, my own deviation is much worse.

Can you acknowledge that before God? I've taken far greater liberties than that. I've presumed upon Him and established my own standard independent of what He has expressly said in His Word and thought somehow that He winked on such practices as that because after all, for the most part, I am rather obedient. Oh, precious children, a prophet looked out upon a people who were well-garbed, well-dressed, doing every proper religious thing prescribed by God and he saw them full of sores, bruised, needing to be bound up with ointment, from the crown of their heads to the soles of their feet, full of putrefying sores.

He looked on their proud city of Jerusalem in which they boasted with their resplendent temple and he saw it as a city besieged, desolate, forsaken. Believe in the Lord your God, so shall you be established.

Believe in His prophets, so shall you prosper.

If Israel had only hearkened, if they had only counseled with the Lord, if only they had washed themselves and made themselves clean and put the evil of their doings away from His eyes, if they had learned to do well, if they had reasoned together, they would have been as white, though their sins had been as garment. The long and short of it is there's no such thing as a small sin. Every sin, however small in our sight, exalts us above the Most High and is an offense to Him who is Holy, Holy, Holy.

Precious God, in Jesus' great name, who brought our foolish mouth, Lord, in the mood that you have created in our life this day, born out of my own transgression, and have tried to speak to us out of that mood, something very deep in your own heart of what is the depths of our sinfulness, what is the extent of our arrogancy and self-love and selfishness, what is the extent of our disregard and our disdain and ignoring of you in small things. Thank you, precious God, that there's a place to which we can come in honest repentance where we can be made clean, though we were as scarlet. And in the name of Jesus, I just invite those to whom God has spoken through these few words tonight and by this spirit to come.

I don't know how you shall do it. We've made a mock of this, as we have of so many things. Invitations galore to where we read of them.

But there is a place of confession and turning and repentance, not just of a defect or a quirk of personality or of a small transgression, but of a fundamental nature that still is existing and having, in the last analysis, its own way. Of that, God would have you to repent and bring to the cross and put it away ruthlessly.

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