

Diluted Christianity

by Bill McLeod

The sermon warns against the dangers of diluted Christianity, which can manifest in various ways, including substitution, stagnation, materialism, and a narrow sectarian spirit.

Duration: 54:37

Scripture: Isaiah 58:1, Revelation 2:1

Topics: "Lukewarmness"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of good works in the lives of believers. He references Ephesians 2:10 and Titus, highlighting that believers are created in Christ Jesus for good works and should be careful to maintain them. The preacher also discusses the need to live a godly life, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts. He shares a personal anecdote about a young man being led to Christ in a somewhat superficial manner, highlighting the importance of genuine salvation. The sermon concludes with a reminder from Isaiah and Revelation about the need to confront and repent of sin in order to truly please God.

Transcript

Isaiah chapter 1 and verse 22. Here the Lord says, your silver is become dross, your wine mixed with water. Your silver has become dross, your wine mixed with water.

And then supporting that, verse 25 of the same chapter, I will turn my hand upon you and purely purge away your dross and take away all your tin. I want to talk about diluted Christianity because that's what our text is suggesting, that there is a diluted form of faith. Your wine is mixed with water.

It's not pure or powerful or strong as once it was. It's diluted and it's weak. The silver is no longer silver, it's dross.

Your silver is become dross. Your wine mixed with water. Which is just one way of saying that revival is not forever.

Many times in revival movements people have a very powerful personal experience and they think somehow this is going to last forever, this is going to keep them moving forever down the road in the right direction, and it doesn't work that way. Whether you think in terms of an awakening as we call them, a large spiritual movement or a personal matter insofar as revival is concerned, it's not forever. It can be

forever insofar as an individual Christian is concerned.

But normally it's not. We want to look at that carefully today. Remember that when Abraham died, the Philistines came and they filled all the wells that Abraham had dug, so that Isaac his son had to re-dig all those wells.

And I'm positive they didn't go looking for new material to put in the wells. They took the material that was piled beside the hole in the ground, the original material, and they piled it all back in. And Paul had to say to a person like Peter in Galatians chapter 2, he said, Peter, this is in effect what you've done.

If I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. And Peter was guilty of building things that he had already destroyed. He was putting the old garbage back in the hole again so that it really wasn't a well.

It wasn't even a hole in the ground. That was gone. Ever notice in the Bible when Elisha died, the scripture says in that same context that the Moabites abandoned the Moabites, invaded the land? The man of God had died and the devil began to work by sending in his servants, just as had happened when Abraham died.

Revival is not forever, and yet it can be on a personal level. One of the characteristics of our deluded faith, one, substitution, where we substitute something good for something not so good or important. For example, Jesus Christ said in Matthew chapter 23, You pay tithe, but you have omitted the weightier matters of the law.

And we've made the mistake of teaching our people that as long as they give a tenth of their income to God, they're a hot Christian. They must be fully committed to God because they're giving one dollar and ten. But the Pharisees were all doing that.

You pay tithe, and he said, but you have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, faith, and the love of God. These ought you to have done, and not to leave the other undone. So then, there are weightier matters than giving a tithe.

Judgment, mercy, faith, and the love of God. Don't ever allow tithing to become a substitute for the love of God, or faith, or mercy, or judgment. And then stagnation, where there's no forward progress in the life at all.

Someone said to us just the other day here, there's been no progress in my life in years. In Hebrews chapter 5 we read this, When for the time, that is, considering the time, maybe we could put it this way, considering the years that you've known the Lord. When for the time you ought to be teachers, you have need that one teach you again, which be the first principles of the oracles of God, and are become such as have need of milk, and not of solid food, not of strong meat.

For everyone that uses milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But strong meat, solid food, belongs to them that are of full age, even to them who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. Wherefore, he says, leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of eternal judgment.

And this is what we do if God permits. When for the time you ought to be teachers, you have need that one teach you again. And here we are, way back, and standing in need of simple fundamental principles of the word of God, when we ought to be teaching the deeper things of the word of God to others.

Substitution, stagnation. And then, pleasure loving, lovers of pleasure, more than lovers of God, not really. Lovers of pleasure, rather than lovers of God.

That's exactly what he said. And we have much of that today. You know in the book of Proverbs it says, he that loves pleasure shall be a poor man.

Now you may have lots of money in the bank so that you can indulge your lust for pleasure, but you'll be poor spiritually. And you know what the marginal reading there is for pleasure? It's the word sport. He that loves sport.

I like sport, but I don't love it. So he that loves sport shall be a poor man. There are Christians, I once knew a preacher, he knew the batting average of every batter in the National League down in the United States of America.

Every one of them. He was a Canadian. And I might be wrong in this, but I don't think he knew the names of the twelve apostles.

And so, I remember hearing a fellow one time, a Christian leader, and he said that we needed to know what was going on in the sporting world. We ought to expose ourselves, we ought to know who these men are and what they're doing and all this kind of thing. Or you're a total ignoramus.

Or you're listening to an ignoramus preach. I don't know the batting average of anybody in the National League or for that matter in any other league. Hey, do you know something? They aren't going to play baseball in heaven.

Or hockey either. Do you think you'll feel at home there? You know, some Christians they get, they would be so grouchy. I mean, you couldn't talk to them for a week if they missed a certain game.

And I know a church in Canada. They changed their prayer meeting from Wednesday night to Thursday night because on Wednesday night they were having stock car racing and their people wanted to go to the stock car races. So they accommodated their desires and they switched the prayer meeting.

Can you feature it? A gospel preaching church in the city of Edmonton did that. Lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God. You know, the Bible says that covetousness is idolatry and the covetous man is an idolater.

So here we have now materialistic spirit, a materialistic spirit. I've mentioned this before. Occasionally there's a tremendous book.

I don't know where you can get it actually. I think it's still in print, but it's called Mammon, the Demon of Greed. It's a remarkable book for this reason.

I don't think the writer has missed a single text in the Bible that deals with the problem of materialism, covetousness. With their mouth they show much love, but their heart goes after their covetousness. But that verse in Jeremiah that says, they are mad upon their idols.

Covetousness is a form of insanity. When we so well know that everything we see, all the material world, will be vaporized by the power of God in a coming day, and that perhaps very soon, a man's life does not consist in the abundance of the things which he possesses. Contrary to the way that the average evangelical lives today, it isn't how much you have.

It's what you are. Remember that verse in Ephesians 4? Let him that stole steal no more, but rather let him labor, working with his hands a thing which is good, that he may have to put in a bank and get eight percent interest on. But that isn't what it says, and you well know that.

What does it say? That he may have to put in a bank for his old age. Isn't that what it says? No. Does it say that he may have to invest in stocks and bonds? No.

That he may have to give to him that needs. That's what it says. So we're not supposed to be laying up for ourselves.

Work, labor, working with your hands, the thing that is good that you may have to give. That's what he said. And so Jesus said the same thing in Luke chapter 6 in different words when he said, and lend, hoping for ten percent.

No. And lend, hoping for nothing. And there isn't a Christian in a thousand that would live by that philosophy.

They wouldn't think of investing a thousand dollars with a prospect of getting nothing back. I mean, that's not wise. You're not being a good steward of God's money.

Materialism, a grasping, materialistic spirit, and sometimes that can be very, very subtle. We can explain everything we do, everything we accumulate. We have a reason for doing this.

God told me to do this. You know how people talk. The Holy Ghost told me to do this.

Well, you can't argue with the Holy Ghost, but you certainly question sometimes their appeal to this particular source as authority for what they're doing when the Word of God condemns it. The Word of the Holy Ghost condemns it. A materialistic spirit.

And then lovers of ease, like, you know, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God, but lovers of ease. Then I'll say to my soul, soul, take thine ease. Eat, drink, and be merry.

Listen. The gospel, salvation, is not a ticket to heaven. It's a uniform and a lifelong enlistment in the army of God.

Thou therefore endure hardness, hardship, as good soldiers of Jesus Christ. You know, some people have to sleep in water in a tent. They'd give up in the Christian life.

Now, I'm not preaching myself, but I remember years ago when I was a shantyman missionary. Here I was, one cold, 40 below, and I was on top of a load of frozen lumber being pulled behind a truck across a bunch of open lakes. And, of course, the truck traveling at 30 miles an hour, so pulling these huge sleighs behind, and it created a wind of 30 or 40 miles an hour, and I just about froze to death.

And I was lying on top of frozen lumber to begin with, and I had nothing to hold on to. I was in danger of falling off. I had a tightener chain over the top, and that's the only thing you could hold on to.

There were no stakes in the side. If I put my hand under the tightener chain and the load shifted, I'd lose my hand. Besides, the chain was very, very cold.

And there I lay, and the devil got on my back and said, what a stupid fool you are. Thou therefore endure hardness, as good soldiers of Jesus Christ. I was shocked when I read the following out of a missionary conference somewhere in the states.

I don't think it would be any different here in Canada. They had about 40 missionary societies represented, and, of course, representatives of the missions in each of these booths. And each one was asked to keep a record of the kind of questions that young people were asking about the mission field.

Do you know what the number one question was? What will the salary be? Do you know what the number two question was? What kind of accommodation will I have to live in? These were the questions at the top of the list. What kind of retirement benefits? What happens if I get sick? And the last question of all was, what are the opportunities for winning souls to Christ? A diluted form of Christianity. We're glad that Paul did it, but we don't want to do it ourselves.

We don't want to have sleepless nights when God lays a burden for souls in our hearts and country sometimes. We don't want that. We're lovers of pleasure and lovers of ease.

Take your ease. That's the way the world is, and we have lots of opportunities for doing it here in Canada and the states. It's very simple.

This is how, in part, we can recognize this kind of a spirit. Then there's superficiality and doctrine. People don't want to hear any deep things from the Word of God.

They just want light, little sermonettes and so on. Do you remember in John chapter 6, verse 66? It says, from that time, many of his disciples went back and walked no more with him. From what time? Did you ever notice from what time it was that these people went back? They were disciples.

They were learners, but they were offended by something Christ said, and they went back. Many, not just a few, many of his disciples went back, and they never walked with him again. What did he say? He said, no man can come to me except the Father who has sent me draw him.

He put God in the saddle. You can't come to God when you feel like it. If God doesn't draw you by the Holy Spirit, you'll never come.

That's what he said. And they didn't like that kind of preaching because that didn't agree with their notions about man's free will. Free will? Man's an absolute total slave.

God has to give repentance before men can acknowledge the truth and recover themselves of the snare of the devil. But they didn't like that. They wanted superficial teaching, light.

Like it says in the Old Testament, the prophets are light and treacherous people. They were light, and they produced a nation that was the same as they. Superficiality in doctrine, superficiality in practice.

Dick said something about it in a previous session. You know, all their works they do for it to be seen of men. They want glory of men.

Nothing is done for the glory of God. They never think about the all-seeing eyes of God. The eyes of the Lord aren't every place beholding the evil and the good.

And way back in their subconscious, they'd agree with that, but not in any practical way that it might have an effect on their life. So when they fast, they make sure somebody knows about it. When they pray, likewise.

When they give, likewise. They have to advertise it. I heard about a Texas oil millionaire that sold \$10 million worth of oil shares and gave a million-dollar tithe check to his Baptist church down in Texas.

And it was in almost all the newspapers of America. And I said to myself, the poor fellow, he just burned up a million dollars because heaven wouldn't take it. You're not to let your left hand know what your right hand is doing when you're giving.

Well, Billy Sonny's comment on that was this, that if the average person gives so little, the left hand would be mightily embarrassed to know. So superficiality in practice, in giving, in praying. Yes, in just about everything that we do.

Infected by this thing called self, we want recognition for what we're doing. You know, there was a time when in Catholic churches, when people gave so much money to the church and their name was posted. And we Protestants used to look on that with horror.

But they do that in Protestant churches now. And you can get recognized if you give a \$50, or a \$500, or a \$5,000 gift. You'll get special recognition for that.

You know what you're doing? You're burning up your money. God can't accept that. You're not to even let your left hand know what your right hand is doing.

If you do, you've lost it. It doesn't mean anything to God then. Superficiality.

And then you see it in music. Back in Spurgeon's day, they had this problem to a much lesser extent. And here was his comment on it.

He said, you know, a lot of our modern hymns are mermaid poetry. They're fair enough on the surface, where they break the surface, but they're totally fishy in the lower parts. Then he called it wax-nosed hymnology, made to fit the face of any creed.

And we've got all kinds of that sort of songs today. You can put them, you know, they'll go with any creed or no creed. They're just nice songs.

But the Bible says we're to teach and admonish one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. And any song that doesn't teach and any song that does not admonish should not be sung. Songs of praise, yes.

Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs sung from a grace-filled heart to the Lord. Not to others. I went through a recent songbook, a new songbook.

I think there were 87 songs. 75 of them were totally subjective, all about me and my problems. I get sick to death listening to that kind of singing.

It does absolutely nothing for me. I know about my problems. I want to hear about the grace of God, the power of God, the power of God's Spirit, and these things.

I don't want to hear it anymore, and I hear it everywhere I go. Oh, so often I sit on a platform saying, God, forgive us for this kind of singing. Straight entertainment.

We've borrowed 90% from the world insofar as a lot of our music in our churches today is concerned. Superficiality. Just the way it is.

And then the narrow sectarian spirit. I was in revival meetings one time. The Lord had been working powerfully.

There were 10 churches cooperating, and I overheard something that you won't believe. I overheard a pastor from a Baptist church and a pastor from an Alliance church, and they were discussing, you'll never guess what, they were discussing how they could do some Sunday school calling for the Nazarene church because their church was so small. Is there anyone in this building that's ever heard anything like that? I mean, that's incredible.

I'll bet the devil had nightmares for a week over that. I mean, supposing this swept across the country and everybody started doing that. He'd be in trouble for a thousand years, but their hearts were filled with love.

Do you know how it is? If there's a revival in the church, I remember being in a church one time. I was not there as a speaker at all. I was with a friend who was doing the speaking many years ago, and I was a very, very young preacher.

And here was this tiny church and we're sitting around having coffee or something, and somebody happened to mention another church in the area that had only been in the area for three, four years, and they were up to 200 people already. And this guy only had about 30 or 40. He'd been there for 40 years, at least the church had.

And so somebody made the mistake of saying, isn't it wonderful what God's doing over in that other group? And that preacher just snorted. And he said, huh, eagles don't go on flocks. And I had to clap my hand over my big mouth to keep from saying, no, but sheep do.

We're not eagles, you know, we're sheep. But that's that kind of a spirit. And then a narrow provincial outlook so that Canada or the United States is everything.

If something great happens here, God does something great here. Boy, that really registers. That's fantastic.

We talk about it, but if it happens in the Belgian Congo, we don't even think about it. It's not important somehow. And the average Christian has a very narrow provincial outlook.

He's not lined up with the Word of God. Matthew chapter 13, remember what it says? That little statement, the field is the world. God's field always was the world.

It never was Canada. And I think we'll shine a lot better at home when we shine better over there. I think of one group.

Now, I'm not thinking of the Alliance denomination at this point at all, but I think of one group. They think they have a very good missionary program. Their missionary program is probably about one-half what the Alliance program would be.

I'm not with the Alliance Church. I mean, I'm not a member of one of their churches. I love these people.

But there's another very large evangelical denomination in North America. And if they were to have as many missionaries as this other Baptist group had, they would have to have 18 times as many as they had. And yet they think they have a fantastic missionary program because they've never looked around to see what God is doing.

And God raises up groups to rebuke other groups and to give us a little idea of what He can do. But people are so superficial here, they don't really worry about it. I mean, if a soul goes to hell in Africa, so what? He had a black skin.

It doesn't mean anything. God is colorblind. God doesn't recognize boundaries.

Do you think boundaries exist to God? God visits every country in the world. He never has to go through custom once. I say it again, the eyes of the Lord are in every place.

Beholding the evil and the good, God is everywhere. And He's as powerful anywhere as anywhere else. And oh, that we might see this, and by the grace of God, nail that narrow, bigoted feeling about other Christians to the cross, and our narrow provincial outlook, that we might nail it to the cross, because I think that part of the secret of a sweeping revival will be found right here.

We've got to deal with these things personally, instead of running down some other church and another group that's doing well when our own is not, and we get jealous, and we say little snippy things about it, and we grieve the Spirit of God, because He's the one that's blessing over in that church, and you're running down the work of the Spirit of God. There isn't a person in this building that would dare to blaspheme the Holy Spirit, because you know what the Bible says about it. But in the book of Hebrews, it uses another term.

It talks about those that insult. The Spirit of grace. So if you talk against some Christian work, you're talking against the Spirit of God.

And then we pray to be filled with the same Spirit. It's impossible. Then there's a failure to really, honestly accept the Word of God as being all for me.

Christ had to say even after His resurrection, all fools and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken, ought not Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory. And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded on them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. And so I think of a verse in Psalm 119, verse 133.

I think I gave the wrong references at 128. Therefore I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right, and I hate every false way. I hate, I hate every false way.

Any way that does not agree with the Word of God, I hate it. It says of Jesus Christ in Hebrews chapter 1, that God anointed Him with the oil of gladness above His fellows. Did you ever think of Jesus Christ being the happiest person on earth? But that's really what it says.

He was anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows. And why? The context tells us why. Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity.

Therefore, God has anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows. And when we come to that place where our life is totally committed to God and lined up thoroughly with the Word of God, then we'll know the oil of joy. Jesus Christ came to give the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness, that we might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He might be glorified thereby.

Every plant, said Jesus, that my Heavenly Father has not planted shall be rooted up. I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right, and I'll conform my life to the Word of God at whatever cost. I'll accept it once and for all, and anything God shows me in this book.

You know, many times when we think in terms of total committal, we're thinking of some kind of a little experience that might take a half an hour, an hour, and I'll get rid of some sin, and I'll sort of kind of nail self to the cross, except I don't feel like doing that. But we don't think in terms of a total surrender to the Word of God. Otherwise, my committal is not really very practical, not true, not real.

I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right, and I hate every false way. Now these are the characteristics, at least some of the things I've been mentioning, are characteristics of a diluted form of faith. Thy silvers become dross, thy wine mixed with water.

What did God say to the prophet Isaiah in chapter 58? Cry aloud, spare not, lift up your voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgressions, and the house of Jacob their sins. Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God. They ask of me the ordinances of justice.

They take delight in approaching to God. Wherefore have we fasted, they say, and God you don't even see us, fasting and praying and tithing and all these things. Did God say to the prophet, because he could see into the heart of the nation, lift up your voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins.

That's the Old Testament. Listen to the new in Revelation chapter 2, the message of God to the church at Ephesus. What did God say? You know, God said there were 10 good things about that church, and those 10 good things were all wiped out because one thing was wrong.

They were strong for sound doctrine. They hated anything that was false. They attested people who claimed they were apostles.

They found them liars, and they kicked them out. They put all kinds of labor, energy into their work for God, and so on. 10 good things, all of them canceled out because one thing was wrong.

You have left your first love, and God said if you don't get that first love back, I'm going to put the candle out. He's not impressed by a lot of frantic activity unless our activity is in the power and energy and in the direction of the Spirit of God. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be you steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.

For as much as you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord, but it's presupposed that that is based upon a life that's controlled by the Spirit of God. Otherwise, it can't be acceptable to our wonderful God.

Now, how have we come to this in our churches today, where you have to beg people to attend their prayer meeting? And you get into a church with 1,500 people, and the preacher tells you he's lucky if he has 25 in the prayer meeting.

Remember what Duncan Campbell said about the revival in the Hebrides? He was telling us. He talked about backsliders. He said, we don't know five backsliders in 20 years.

So I said, what is a backslider? And he said, a backslider is a professing Christian who does not regularly attend the prayer meeting. Well, I said, if that's true, then we have literally tens of thousands of backsliders in our evangelical churches in North America. And he was horrified.

So we have to beg people to get involved in the work of God. And if we all profess, this is the most important thing in life. How have we come to this? How is it that the wine is mixed with water? It's diluted and powerless.

What's happened? It's for a number of reasons. One, we've preached gospel without law. The Bible says the law is good.

And more than that, in Romans chapter 7, it says that the commandment is holy. It's just. It's good.

The law is spiritual. But I'm carnal, so I'm a sinner. What part does the law play in preaching the gospel? The law was added because of transgressions.

The law is there to show man his sin. The law was our schoolmaster to lead us to Christ. And you cannot find Christ unless the law is your schoolmaster.

And there are thousands of people in our churches who really perhaps are not born again at all, because there was no work of the law in their hearts. The Puritans never made that mistake. They understood.

They called it the work of the law. Then he talked about a powerful law work. These men never made the mistake that we're making today.

Contemporaries of George Whitfield, unbelievers, prominent men, they said, we can't understand it. He tells the people they're half devils, and they're half beasts, and they love it. They couldn't understand it.

But when Whitfield told them this, he told them with tears from a heart filled with love. But I'll tell you, he told them. And the great men of God down through the ages, they've told the people.

It's law, first of all. The law is good. And then in that same context, 1 Timothy chapter 1, later on he says, the glorious gospel.

The law is good, but the gospel is glorious. But don't preach the gospel before you preach law. I mean, people have to know their sin before they can be lost.

I sat once, it was in the United States, with a preacher. And he met a young man who was in the Air Force. And the three of us sat down together, and the preacher proceeded to lead him to Christ.

And people, I hope in my heart of hearts that I'm not being critical. I'm not. I trust.

I love this brother. Here's how it went. He talked to the young man very nice way, very, very nice, tender way.

Where are you from? What do your parents do? How long have you been in the services and so on? And then when it came time to go, the pastor said, now he said, I would like very much to pray for you. Do you mind if I pray for you? The fellow said, no, no, that's okay. So he prayed.

And here's what happened. He prayed, Lord, bless this young man, bless his family. And suddenly he stopped and he said to the young man, wouldn't you like to just kind of pray a little wee prayer and say, Jesus come into my heart? And the kid said, yeah, yeah.

Okay. He said, pray a little prayer and say, Jesus come into my heart. So he did.

And then the preacher made the pronouncement, you're a Christian now. And I felt so sick at heart. Now I flew with that airman for some hundreds of miles right after that.

And I tried to talk to him. Oh, he said, listen, I did that. I did that in the terminal.

There was no conviction of sin, not a word was said about it. And so it's this kind of thing. We preach gospel without preaching law.

Who has warned you to do what? To flee from the wrath to come. That's how John the Baptist preached. How did Christ preach? You serpents, you generation of vipers, how can you escape the damnation of hell? They were not throwing puff balls at a granite cliff.

They had atomic weapons. People's hearts have to be broken for their sin. Let me tell you something.

They came out of a great revival in the 1700s. Jonathan Edwards, man marvelously used of God. He was the principal leading light along with the tenents and with George Whitfield and some amazing revivals that swept across the country.

And here's what he said. He said the spirit of God was convicting people in two distinct and definite ways. He convicted them about their sins, their actual sins against God.

But there was another word distinct and definite that the spirit of God was doing. He was convicting men apart from this other. He was convicting them of their sinfulness, that they were lost, that they had a fallen nature that deserved hell.

That self was an awful creature contrary to God in all its ways and parts. But how did that happen? As men of God that knew the heart of men and knew the word of God, they preached the law and the gospel. The Holy Spirit was able to do his work because Jonathan Edwards looked on this as being a very, very important thing.

And man may see his sins and not see his self, his wickedness. I was in an office one time when I was a very young Christian and a couple of men were talking. I think they were Anglicans because there were maybe eight people or so in the room and they were talking about the confession of faith that they made in their church.

And there's a line, I've seen that confession, and there's a line that says, us miserable offenders. And the one fellow said, I don't hack that man. He said, we're not a bunch of miserable offenders.

It speaks as if we're just a bunch of worms or something. The other fellow said, I feel exactly the way you do. I just, I just don't go along with that at all.

We're not miserable offenders. And I was a young Christian. I wanted to say something, but I didn't have the nerve.

And a godly Christian spoke up, an older man that I got to know through that very well, a man of God. He spoke up, took the word of God, and very skillfully he showed these men Christ died not for good people. He died for the ungodly.

And if we're not willing to be ungodly or to see ourselves as being ungodly, he's not willing to say this. Moreover, he can't. I have to be lost before I can be saved.

The Son of Man has come to seek and to save, that which is lost. And then we have preached faith without repentance. And you cannot have a saving faith, a genuine saving faith, unless you have repentance, first of all.

Does the Bible really say that? Dick said something from a text in John 5, this morning. How can you believe? How can you have faith who receive honor one of another and seek not the honor that comes from God only? And then something the Lord Jesus Christ said in the Gospel of Matthew. He said, John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him.

But he said, the publicans and the harlots, they believed him, and you, when you had seen it afterward, did not repent that you might believe. You can't believe until you repent. And that's why there are many people in our church that never knew what repentance was.

What is it? Jesus gave us a beautiful story that gives the essence or heart of it, also in the Gospel of Matthew, about a farmer who spoke to two of his sons. He said to one son, go work today in my vineyard. And he said, I will not.

But afterward he repented and went. He repented and he went. John the Baptist preached, repent, the Kingdom of God is here.

When Christ began his public ministry, as in Mark chapter 1, he said, the time is fulfilled and the Kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe the Gospel. You can't believe the Gospel until you repent.

On the day of Pentecost, Peter said, repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins. And you shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost for the promises unto you and to your children and to all that are far off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. And remember from Hebrews 5 and 6, not laying in the foundation of repentance from dead works, that's the beginning of it all.

The very first beginning of the foundation on which the Christian life is built is repentance. Repentance from dead works and secondly, faith toward God. And if you remember how Paul spoke to the elders of the Ephesian church in Acts chapter 20, he said he'd gone everywhere preaching two things, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

Notice the order. A change of mind. Let me put it in the language of Isaiah in chapter 55 of his book.

This is repentance. Let the wicked forsake his way. His way, whatever your way is.

Forsake it, give it up. And the unrighteous man, his thoughts, the way you think, is not the way God thinks. Before we become a Christian, we're probably wrong in our thinking 99% of the time.

Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts and let him return unto the Lord and he will have mercy upon him and to our God for he will abundantly pardon. Did you ever repent of your sins? Did you ever see it this way that your sins nailed Christ the Son of God on the cross? He was delivered for our offenses, your sins and my sins, they nailed him on the cross. And that's why God looks on sin the way that he does.

God has such pure eyes, he can't look on iniquity. He can't look on it. We too are to hate it with all our heart.

And then we've preached grace without works. I well know that salvation is entirely and only by the grace of God. I have no problems there.

But it seems everywhere I turn the Word of God, grace and works are linked together. Here's how it goes. You know, what we often do in Bible reading, we stop at the wrong place.

And so we miss the truth. Because the context modifies, illuminates and explains the text. So then, by grace are you saved through faith.

And if not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast. And that's where we all stop. What's the next verse? For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them.

And Paul in writing to Titus said, he said, Titus, tell those that have believed in God that they might be careful to maintain good works. The grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. And that's where we stop.

What does it go on to say? Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world. We don't preach it that way. You know what it says about taking a widow into the fellowship that is for a church to support a widow? Let not a widow be taken into the fellowship, into the number, who is less than 60 years old, well reported of for good works.

And it lists a whole pile of them there. If she relieved the afflicted, washed the saints' feet, born children, good works, following salvation. Now I'm not saying, I want to make that clear, good works has no part in my being saved, but it's a natural outworking of a life that's been redeemed.

Remember God has ordained before that you and I should walk in good works. Then we preach the Holy Spirit as a doctrine, but not as a person. I believe in the Holy Ghost.

Almost any evangelical would say that. But then he doesn't really know anything about being filled with God's Spirit, or enjoying the leadership of the Holy Spirit. You remember Paul said in writing to the church of Galatia, chapter 5, verse 25, if we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

I may be born again, if I'm born again, I'm living in the Spirit. That doesn't mean I'm walking in the Spirit. And what's verse 24 say, they that are Christ have crucified the flesh with their passions and lusts.

If we live in the Spirit, let's also walk in the Spirit. So he's talking then about crucifixion with Christ, that opens the door and enables me to walk in the Spirit, as well as live in the Spirit. But we haven't preached this.

And the Holy Spirit, to the average person, is a doctrine. The comforters come, or spread the tidings round. It's a beautiful song, rousing, nice to sing, does something to your heart.

But I can sing it, and walk out of the meeting, and nothing really has happened, and I'm still not walking in the Spirit. And I cannot, until I'm surrendered to my God, until I come to the cross, and come to that point where I am willing to be absolutely nothing. Christ Jesus said, except the kernel of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abides alone, fruitless forever.

But if it dies, what then? It brings forth much fruit. We don't need more clever Christians. We've got lots of them.

I heard a preacher say, God doesn't need clever people. God needs clean people. A vessel, as Paul said, fit for the master to use.

Fit, that is holy. Crucified with Christ, and filled with the Spirit of God. We've preached love as a feeling, rather than as an act of my will, directed to people in need.

We haven't thought of it that way. We think it's a nice feeling in the heart. And people think the absence of hatred is love, when it isn't.

Do you remember what it says? Remember Jacob, with the two wives, Rachel and Leah? And it says, when Leah saw that she was hated. But it doesn't say that Jacob hated her. It just says that he loved Rachel more.

But as far as she was concerned, because she didn't have first place, she was hated. We can apply that to other areas of the Christian life also. What is the Holy Spirit? Fourteen times in three chapters in the Gospel of John, he is referred to as he, him, himself.

A person, not an influence. A person who wants to lay his hand on your life and mine, and make it wholly his. So you and I become people that he can use around the world, wherever he wants.

We'll be willing to go. I think of a man I read about years ago. He became a Christian, gave his life completely to God, experienced the filling of the Spirit.

Do you know what he did the first thing the next day? He went out and bought a briefcase, and when his wife asked him why, he said, I think the Lord is going to probably ask me to travel now and then. He became a tremendous soul winner. But he sought from the beginning.

Then we've preached, last of all, the Second Coming. We've appealed to the doctrine of the Second Coming without a corresponding appeal to a holy life. And the Bible doesn't make that mistake when it talks about the return of Jesus Christ.

It says, every man that has this hope in him purifies himself, even as he is pure. And if a Christian is not purifying himself, then he doesn't really probably believe in the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. He's giving a mental assent to a doctrine that he knows is in the Bible, but it doesn't have any practical bearing on his life.

Paul said, And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love, one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you, to the end, that he may establish your hearts, unblameable in holiness, before God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his

saints. What? That he might establish our hearts, unblameable in holiness, at the coming of Jesus Christ. We haven't preached that.

Some of us have. Many have not. I did not always, because I didn't see it.

Then, as I close, what is the remedy? Here's a step, 2 Corinthians 7, 1, having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. Oh, that sin might be dealt with. And many people have been going to the prayer room.

Maybe many more should go at the conclusion of this meeting. Forget about dinner. It's not really important.

What is important is meeting God and issues, a clean heart, pure hands, clean hands and a pure heart. God's recipe for revival in James chapter 4. Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

Draw near to God and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double minded. Be afflicted and mourn and weep.

Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord and he shall lift you up. God's recipe for personal revival is found right there.

And the first step, having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. And the second step is to see that according to the teaching of the Bible, I'm crucified with Christ. I cannot afford to live another day for myself, but for him, that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.

To put it in biblical language, crucified with Christ, to come to the cross and say, God, I don't... perhaps you'd have to say this as I had to say it when I came, Lord, I don't know what it all means, but I want to be crucified I want to die to myself so I can live to your glory. And God heard that prayer. We're not preaching sinless perfection.

I trust you understand that. Nor are we preaching ourselves. We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus, the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.

But to cross and then to be filled with the spirit of God. Be filled, literally, be getting filled with the Holy Spirit every day. My life under God's control.

I want to close with a little illustration. My son Tim and I were on Puget Sound some years ago. Well, it's quite a few years back now.

Tim was probably maybe eight or nine, I'm not quite sure. And we were salmon fishing on Puget Sound. And the fellow in the boat with us was not a Christian.

And the fellow who arranged this was not a Christian, he was a relative of ours and had kindly arranged this, so we went. Five o'clock in the morning we were on the water. Now the purse seiners, these fishing boats, that year up in Alaska, the fishing had been terrible and so the government had given these fishermen a special permit to come down to Puget Sound, which normally didn't allow them to do because this was sport fishing ground.

And the sport fishermen were as mad as can be over this. And the fellow in our boat was a sport fisherman. So we got on the water, we put out the lines, we began to trawl.

And he said to me, he said, if we, you see, at the shore there was a number of purse seiners anchored and there was no sign of life at all. He said, those guys will have a pair of binoculars on us right now, and if we catch one salmon, they'll come out, they'll put their nets in the water, and as soon as their nets go into the water, you'll never catch a salmon. They get excited, they know something's going on in the water, and they won't bite on any lure.

My son caught a salmon, I caught a salmon, chug, chug, chug, chug, chug, chug, chug, chug, the boat started coming up from the shore, and they laid down a net maybe 1,500 feet long in a great big circle. And he pulled that net in, and the fellow in the boat with us, he stood up in the boat, and he was screaming at these guys and shaking his fist and blaspheming, and I said, listen, we're just having a little fun. These people have to make a living, forget about it.

And finally, that net was only 40 feet wide, and it was just filled with beautiful salmon, tails sticking there, heads sticking there, just a boiling mass of fish. I never saw anything like it. We had a couple that were kind of small.

And then I noticed something. There was this little boat, a little rowboat anchored to the shore, and a fellow standing in the boat, and the two nets, like remember it's a purse seine they called it? So it's a round net, and he had two ropes that pulled the bottom together, and he'd been pulling these two ropes in the boat the whole time, pulling the bottom of the net together, until finally he had it together, so the fish couldn't get out of the purse. When he had that job done, he stood up in the boat.

Now some of you older people will remember, I can remember when my mother and I think my wife and I even did it when we were first married. You know, I had a thing with a handle about this long, a hardwood handle, and a flared end on it, a metal end that looked like a funnel. Ever seen those? Some of you have.

I used to use that to pawn the clothes. And he had a thing like that, only the handle on it was about 12, 14 feet long. And he was standing up in the boat, and he was plunging into the water like this.

So I said to the fellow in the boat we were with, what's he doing? Well, he said, there's an eight-foot opening at the end of the net, and all those fish could get out if they only knew, but they don't know that they can get out of the net. So he's scaring them, keeping them in the net. And I've thought often since, what a picture.

There are some of you that are in the net. You don't have liberty. You don't have joy.

You don't have peace. Your life is not fruitful. You want to get out of the net, but maybe the devil's brought you to the place where you think you can't get out of the net.

You can. There is an opening. At the opening, there's a cross, a bloody cross on which Christ died, on which you and I must die.

And if we're willing to die on the cross, we get out of the net. I'm not talking about salvation. I'm using a different picture or illustration now.

Don't you let the devil tell you that you can't have liberty. You know something? Maybe you've gone and you've prayed time and time. You might have done it sometimes.

I remember one lady saying, I've done it 50 times and it never works. And then we discovered she'd never done it God's way, because if you do it God's way once, it will work. Don't let the devil tell you you can't be free, because you can.

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