

How Well Do You Take Correction

by Carter Conlon

The sermon emphasizes the importance of taking correction and being open to the Holy Spirit's rebuke in order to avoid becoming hardened and losing our first love for God.

Duration: 56:17

Scripture: Psalm 51:10-12, Proverbs 5:12-14, Isaiah 58:6-9, Luke 7:36-50, Acts 7:54-60, Galatians 2:11-14, Hebrews 12:6, Revelation 2:1-5

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Godly Humility"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of being open to correction and guidance from God. It highlights the need to have a tender heart, to be willing to change course, and to align with God's will. The speaker shares personal experiences and challenges the congregation to examine their lives, relationships, and actions in light of God's truth and love.

Transcript

Praise God, right on time. How well do you take correction? This is the one time you may want to turn and ask the person beside you who came with you today, how well do you take correction? Proverbs chapter 5. Please, if you go there, special welcome to all of our guests. God bless you.

I hope you avail yourself of the fellowship that's prepared for you after the service today. Proverbs chapter 5. Let's pray together. God Almighty, thank you for the anointing of the Holy Spirit.

Thank you for the strength and the power of God. Lord, quicken our hearts, quicken our ears, quicken your word. Let your word live in us.

Help us, God, to allow you access to our hearts, to the deepest recesses of the reasonings for which we live for you. Challenge us, O God. We cry out like David, the psalmist, search me, see if there be any wicked way in me.

Lead me in the way of life everlasting. I thank you for the anointing of the Holy Spirit. O God Almighty, come upon this frail vessel, animate my heart, my mind, my thoughts.

Lord, I don't want to be in any measure in this message. I'm asking you to overshadow this frailty and come, O God. And I thank you for it with all my heart, in Jesus' name.

Proverbs chapter 5, beginning at verse 1. I'm going to read through to verse 14. My son, attend unto my wisdom, and bow thine ear to my understanding, that thou mayest regard discretion, and that thy lips may keep knowledge. For the lips of a strange woman drop as a honeycomb, and her mouth is smoother than oil.

Now, I see this particular passage before we progress on two levels. Number one is, of course, the physical level, the warning of the Holy Spirit against unchastity. But the second, I think, is a deeper application.

It's a seductive religious spirit. It's not necessarily a spirit that comes always from outside. It can be the seduction of your own heart.

Don't forget that when Adam and Eve sinned, infused into the human nature was the desire to be as God, which means that we create our own value system of acceptable service to the Lord, what's right, what's wrong, what's holy, what's not holy. And if it's unchecked by the Holy Spirit and by the Word of God, we can deviate off, seduced as it is by a religiousness, whether it's an exterior or an interior religiousness, until we no longer look like the Church of Jesus Christ. Until as an individual Christian, we may have an outward appearance of godliness, but there's an extreme lack of inward work of God that the Lord Himself can testify to by working through that particular vessel.

So now let's look again at this. For the lips, verse 3, of a strange woman drop as a honeycomb, and her mouth is smoother than oil, but her end is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. Her feet go down to death, her steps take hold on hell.

Lest thou shouldest ponder the path of life, her ways are movable, that thou canst not know them. Hear me now, therefore, O ye children, and depart not from the words of my mouth. Remove thy way far from her, and come not nigh the door of her house.

Lest thou give thine honor unto others, and thy years unto the cruel. Lest strangers be filled with thy wealth, and thy labors be in the house of a stranger. And thou mourn at the last, when thy flesh and thy body are consumed, and say, How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof? I've not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined mine ear to them that instructed me.

I was almost in all evil in the midst of the congregation and the assembly." Now keep in mind, the New Testament tells us in the book of Hebrews that whom the Lord loves He chastens, even as a father chastens his own son or daughter, and of course it's inclusive. And He chastens us that we might become partakers of His holiness, and that the peaceable working of God might be in us. In other words, for our prophet, for good, He comes and constantly challenges.

Now if you have the Holy Spirit living inside of you as a Christian, the purpose of the Holy Spirit is to comfort you, yes, but there is a comfort if you are a genuine child of God, in the knowledge that I have a Father who's going to keep me on track. He's not going to let me go to the right or to the left of where I should be. And so you have to have an open heart to be able to hear these words.

Proverbs 29 1 warns that if we are often reprov'd and we harden our necks against it, then we're heading on a path of destruction that will come suddenly, and we're not even be aware of it. And I pray God in this church and in my heart that the Holy Spirit can always speak to us, can always challenge us, that we would not ever be under the assumption that everything that we're doing is perfectly in line with the will

and the ways of God for me as a Christian, for you as a body, for us as a corporate church together. A long while back, I left the church office on a midweek day, and I was heading down Broadway going for dinner.

I'm not sure where I was going. I think I was gone for the day. And as I was heading down Broadway, I passed a man sitting on a box, and as I passed him on the box, he said some kind of a nasty comment to me, and I responded in like kind.

And I said something rather uncharitable to him, and I kept on walking. Did you ever notice when you do wrong in the sight of God, that God just hooks a bungee cord to the back of your jacket? And I kept on walking down the street feeling quite righteous in my response, and the Lord kept saying to me, that was rather uncharitable of you. That was, as a matter of fact, was very unkind.

It was unlike me. Irrespective of what was said to you, you didn't need to respond that way. I kept on walking, and then walking got harder and harder every step I took, to the point where you get to the corner, and I don't know if you've ever seen where your feet are moving, but you're not going anywhere anymore.

The cord is pulling so hard. And the Lord said, I want you to go back and apologize to that man, and not only apologize to him, I want you to put something, he was begging, sitting on a box begging, I want you to put something in his cup. Now this brought me into a deeper dilemma.

It was one of the few times that I've ever been walking down the street with all I had was a \$50 bill in my pocket. Now folks, I had plans for that \$50, and even if I didn't have plans, the least plan in my heart was to put that \$50 in this man's cup. And as I'm walking towards him, I'm thinking of all the times in my life not to have a few singles or a five in my pocket.

All I have is a \$50 bill in my pocket, and once I give it to this man, I don't even have a credit card. My dinner has gone out the window. I have nothing, for even my own supper.

Now this is how charitable I'm feeling at this moment, as I'm walking towards this man. So I walked up to him, looked at him, sitting on the box, and I said, I'm a pastor. And I said, I'm really sorry.

I've come back to ask your forgiveness for the remark that came out of my mouth towards you. I said, I shouldn't have done that. And I said, I want you to have this.

And I had the \$50 bill, which he took from my hand. And after he took the \$50, and he looks at me and says, oh you're a pastor, are you? He said, why are you not doing anything for us out on the street? Now folks, I have to admit, I started to get a little hot under the collar right at this moment. Why are you not doing anything? This man's got my \$50 in his hand, and I have nothing in my pocket.

And he's asking me, why are you not doing anything for us? And I said, what do you mean? He said, well I am a Gulf War veteran. He said, I am on drugs. I'm unemployed.

I'm living on the street. And he said, and what are you doing to help me? And immediately I was, I looked at him, I said, listen, I just gave you \$50. I gave you all the money out of my pocket.

What are you talking about? What have I, what am I doing to help you? He said, well I'm thankful for what you just did for me. He said, but what are you doing to help all of us? All of the war veterans coming back.

All of us who are struggling with things that we had to endure.

Wanting to be employed, can't find employment. Not wanting to be on drugs, are on drugs. And immediately these arguments started coming into my heart.

I looked at the man, I said, look, you don't know where I've come from. You don't know what I've gone through. You don't know the price I've paid.

You don't know what our church is doing. You don't know, and I'm telling him all this, all the kids we're feeding around the world, you don't know where I've been. You don't know what I've done.

You don't know the price I've paid to be here at this very moment, standing here in front of you. He said, well, you're right. I don't know about that, but I do know this thing.

You're not doing anything for the war vets that are out on the street in New York City. Now folks, by this point, the volume level of the discussion is raising. And I looked over my shoulder, and I saw people behind me.

This was rather amusing. This guy in the suit is having this, it's not heated yet, but it's moving in that direction. This discussion with this man on the box.

Now I'm a pastor. I'm only a half a block from this church. I've got to do something real quick.

So I did what pastors do. I said, can I pray for you? And he said to me, all right, you can pray for me. So he said, as long as I can pray for you.

And I said, okay. So I put my hand on his shoulder, and I prayed some generic prayer. You know, bless him, do something with him, help him, be with him.

Kind of a prayer. And then he prayed for me, and I walked away. Now listen, we're all prone to take correction, if it comes to us on our terms, and in a manner that doesn't threaten our present self-image.

In Luke chapter 7, Jesus was invited into a Pharisee's house. Now this is God sitting at this man's table. And the Pharisee sees himself as religious, a defender of the faith, as a clean man, and a discerning man.

And here is Christ at the table. And during the course of this interaction, a woman comes in, falls at his feet. Now he's, she's a woman, a sinner, as the Scripture says.

She falls at the feet of Christ. She begins to weep, wash his feet with her tears, and dry them with her hair. She has an alabaster box of a very expensive perfume, breaks it, and anoints his feet with it.

And the Pharisee's sitting there. Now he's being absolutely reprov'd, because what he's observing is the work of God in the earth. He's seen people that he would never touch, things he would never consider doing, places his religiousness has never taken him, and something, quite frankly, he never, doesn't want to do.

He doesn't want to go there. And sitting across the table is Christ, God Almighty Himself, and there's a display, as it is before him, of the work of God. And this whole interaction is a reproof to his religion.

His religion that has left him devoid of the heart of God. He's absolutely bankrupt of who God is, and what God is doing. But looking at this man, there's nothing in him that he finds attractive, just like the Prophet

Isaiah said, like a root out of dry ground.

There's no form. There's none of the fancy garments he's used to. There's no comeliness.

It's not attractive to the natural eye. It's not attractive in the natural taste. And there's nothing about this man that Isaiah said that we should desire him.

And so this man sits now in judgment of the Son of God. He said if this were a holy man, if he were a prophet, he would know what kind of a woman this is that is touching him. And ironically, on the other side of the table, most likely, Jesus is thinking if he were a godly man, he would recognize that this is the work of God that's going on before him.

Remember Isaiah said in chapter 58, if you draw out your soul to the hungry, if you deliver the oppressed, if you give food to those that are clothing to those that are naked, if you don't hide yourself from your own flesh, then you'll call out and I'll say here I am. And the glory of the Lord will come and be your rearward. Or the glory of the Lord will really envelop you and carry you.

And here is an opportunity for this man with God in the flesh sitting at his table to be swept up in the glory of the Lord. But he's hardened himself in his religion. He's on a pursuit of God but on his own terms.

And tragically, that's what happens to many people who profess to know Christ in every generation. You can get so hard in religion. Think of Balaam for a moment.

He's a prophet for hire. This guy is in this for the money. He has some form of spiritual knowledge and he's been hired to go and speak words over the children of Israel.

And he's in danger because he's trying to bring a curse on a people whom God has blessed. And on the journey, a donkey starts speaking to this man and he starts arguing with the donkey. I'll never, as long as I live on this earth, figure this one out.

God is using a donkey to correct this man on his journey and he's arguing with the donkey. He's become so entrenched in his way of doing things. Was this a common occurrence? Did he argue with animals all the time? Did it not occur to him something supernatural might be going on here? His whole religiousness is being challenged by a donkey.

Folks, you can get so entrenched in religion. You can become so sure that what you're doing is right. That God can send something supernatural your way and you don't even see it.

You don't even realize it. You end up arguing with what is a sign from God Himself, trying to move you from one place and into another. Acts chapter 7. Here's a young man.

His name is Stephen. He's serving tables and miracles are beginning to flow through his hands. The religious crowd gather and they're quite offended at the power of God in this young man.

He doesn't have all the degrees. He doesn't have the pedigree that they have. He hasn't got the garments.

He doesn't have the vernacular. He doesn't have all of that stuff, yet God is flowing through him. In Acts chapter 7, he stands and gives a brilliant defense for the gospel of Jesus Christ, empowered by the Holy Ghost with knowledge that he couldn't possibly have had as a youth that age.

And yet not only knowledge, but he has a vision of God. He says, behold I see the heavens open. I see the Son of God standing at the right hand of Almighty God.

You'd think at that point that there might be some in that crowd that would say, well we don't have that vision. We don't have this power of God flowing through our hands. You'd think they might have had a willingness to accept the rebuke and the correction that's being offered them.

Instead they pick up stones and they kill this young man. Think of Peter the Apostle in Galatians chapter 2. He was a man who had an embedded fear of man in his life, and it would manifest from time to time. And Paul saw him causing the Gentiles to behave in a way that he knew the Scripture said was not right.

And Paul says in Galatians, I withstood him to the face because he was to be blamed. Now what could Peter have done in a case like that? He said, who are you to rebuke me? You're just a newcomer here. Aren't you the guy that used to persecute the church? Didn't you haul people off to prison? Didn't you torture some and cause them to deny the name of the Lord Jesus Christ? Listen, I'm one of the Apostles here.

I was here in the beginning. I sat at the last table with Christ. Where were you when I sat at the last table? Now Peter could have rightly rose up and defended himself with this newcomer, Paul, standing there before other people as well, saying you're wrong in what you're doing.

The way you're making the Gentiles to move into a hypocrisy to appease the Jews is not right. This is not what Christ has done. All men are now made equal.

There's no class distinction. There's no race. There's no culture distinction now.

We are one in the body of Christ. And Peter could have been so highly offended, but there's no evidence in Scripture that Peter was offended. I love the way Charles Finney said it.

Let me just... I'm paraphrasing Finney, but here's what he said. A religious man in a prayer meeting will openly declare himself to be a faithless, prayerless, lazy, heartless wretch, but let his wife call him the same thing when he gets home, and then we find out what's really in his heart. Think of the book of Revelation.

Now the last book in the New Testament is written by the pen of the Apostle John. There are seven churches that are addressed in this book. Now think about it for a moment.

These churches are not even a stone's throw from the cross. This is first-generation Christianity. These people have the Apostle John still alive.

They have Paul. This is a church that could rightly say, who are you to correct us? We're only ones yet. We have people alive that knew Jesus Christ, that walked with Him.

We've got people among us that were there on the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came down like cloven tongues of fire. We've gone throughout the world, and many of us have risked our lives for the cause of Christ. Now who are you to come and say to us that our practices may not be right, they may not be correct? Can you imagine now, John had a firsthand revelation from Jesus Christ.

Jesus came to John, and he's the one who walks among the testimony of the churches and said, John, I see something there. There are commendable things, but there are other things going on as well. If these

things are not addressed, this church may lose its way, or these congregations may lose their way.

And so Christ gives John words which he pens down in letters and sends them to the churches. Now I want you to go back in time right now. You imagine you're one of these first generation churches, and you get this letter from the Apostle John.

Imagine if you're the church of Ephesus. This church is working hard. This church is discerning.

They're testing and proving those that say they're apostles and are not, and are finding them to be liars. They're doing more works. They're doing them in the name of Jesus.

And this letter comes from John, and he says, you're doing all of these things, and they're good, but there's something I have against you. The Lord tells you, you've left your first love. Now I'm going to paraphrase what is written in the Scriptures.

This is my own paraphrase of these five churches. You've left your first love, and you stand in danger of completely being rendered ineffective in the kingdom of God. You imagine that kind of a message coming to a hard-working church.

You're doing, doing, doing, doing, but you forgot who you're doing it for. You've lost your first love. That passion that was in your heart when you first heard and first received, that which sent you into the prayer closet with prayers of gratitude and delight and intercession is now gone, and it's all been replaced with works.

Now you're just doing things in the name of God, and if you don't get this right, you're going to lose their whole testimony. Folks, this is not an arguable point. There have been denominations throughout history that were doers in the kingdom of God, but today their testimony is gone, and historians say that Ephesus lost its candlestick.

Not long after this letter was written, this church seems to, throughout history, have just disappeared. It went off the map. There's not even a historical record.

I'm talking about archaeologically, historically, that it was actually there. Another letter comes to Pergamos, and the word says you've tolerated a worldly thinking. You have a mind that is more and more gravitating to the things of this world.

Your strategies, the things you're doing, how you're doing them, how you view things, you've adopted the strategies of the world, and if it's not dealt with, it will leave you outside of where the true power and life of Christ is found. Folks, this is to be a supernatural walk. Morning by morning, you and I are to get up and see new mercies, knowing that we didn't figure this out.

We didn't strategize this. We believed God, and God, through the Holy Spirit, made it a reality, and as we're growing in this grace, as we're growing in the knowledge of Christ, we're not bringing just words about God. We're bringing to our generation a living experience with the living Christ.

We're changing, the Bible says, from image to image and glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. If I ever get to the point where all I can bring you is just a theory about God or some historical revelation of the past, it's time to get out of the pulpit. I should be growing in grace.

I should be moving forward in God. There should be this constant change come into my heart that no amount of religion can ever cause me to lose. Thyatira, he said, you've allowed a seductive prophetic spirit, and that was operating through a vessel called Jezebel.

You've allowed this seductive prophetic spirit to lead you into practices, the Lord says, which I've declared to be wrong, and everyone who follows her will die. There's a spiritual seduction. That's where we began, remember, in Proverbs chapter 5. Folks, you have to be aware of it.

Beware of every voice that can't be proven in this book. Beware of it. Beware of speaking that cannot be established by the patterns of Scripture, the patterns of how God deals, and who God is, and what God does.

If I speak anything to you that's prophetic, you should be able to prove it through the way God has always dealt with humanity in the past, and the way he will deal with us also in the present. Sardis, he says, you have a reputation of life, but you're in reality dead. Can you imagine getting that kind of a letter? Come to this church.

You have a reputation of life. Boy, your songs are incredible, and you've got a full sanctuary, and you're doing all kinds of things, but he says, you are in reality dead, and the word in the Greek is nekros, and it means you're cut off from the Holy Spirit. Folks, you can get so good at doing religious things, we can actually do it without God at some point.

Now, we're not doing it. We think we're doing it. You're dead, he said.

You're cut off from the enlivening influence of the Holy Spirit. God forbid that that should ever be the testimony of your life, or mine, or of this house. Remember, he says, the truth that once gave you life and turned back to it while you still can.

Now, let us see of the last church. He said, you have everything figured out. You have no, you see, no need to change anything.

If what you have is right, Christ says, then tell me why are you so spiritually passionless? If it's all right, if everything you have is right, if all your strategies are right, if all your steps to this, and methodologies to that, if it's all right, if you've got it all figured out, why, why, why are you so passionless? Why are you neither hot nor cold? Why are you just sort of stuck in the middle? You can't really get excited about the things of God. You dare not say you're cold. You do go to church, but it doesn't go really beyond that.

Christ says to the church of Laodicea, can't you see that I'm completely outside of your religious practice, and I'm trying to get in? Now folks, can you see the people reading these words of warning? They're very first thing that they would say is, who wrote this? Who dare tell us that we're not doing what we should be doing? The answer would be an old man in jail. Probably had to sit on a box to write these words. He says he knows God and still hears his voice.

You know folks, I walked away from the war vet on the box and I was troubled by two things. That's one, this is two. As I walked away, I was troubled by the tenderness of how he placed his hand on top of mine as if he really cared about me.

I put my hand on his shoulder like a garden claw, more or less, and he put his hand on top of mine, and there was a tenderness in that man that startled me. And secondly, I was troubled by the eloquence and

the sincerity of his prayer for me. Didn't pray like a man living on the street.

This man prayed like he knew God, and he prayed a profound prayer for me, and it shook me inside. I walked away, and yet I couldn't walk away. I began to think about what he had said.

He said, you know what to do, why aren't you doing it? And I began to think, God, what aren't we doing for the veterans in New York City? What am I doing? What is this church doing? How are we being part of the solution of a very, very large problem? Did you know that there have been more veterans from the Vietnam War that have committed suicide than died in the war? Did you know that? It's a huge problem. Did you know that we have thousands and thousands now of Iraqi war vets that are going to be coming home? Some of them can't talk, folks. I met a young man recently, he's only in his 20s, very sharp young man, all dressed in a suit.

His sister brought him to this church. I met him in one of the adjacent rooms. I started to talk to him, only to realize that he can't talk anymore.

He's about 23 years old, fit, sharp looking. He can't talk. I don't know what he saw.

I don't know what happened to him. So finally I said to him, listen, you can come to this church, okay, and you'll be safe here. And I said, you can come here, and then he nodded at me.

Okay, I'll come here. But he still couldn't talk. And we have a lot of young men and women who are going to be coming our way in the not-too-distant future.

And I left that encounter with a resolve to do what I should be doing. Isaiah 58, I can end up right in the seat of the Pharisee, seeing the work of God, but yet saying, well I'm doing enough. We're doing enough.

We've come far enough. We don't need to change this. We don't need to make any adjustments to what we're doing.

But I left there with a resolve to do what I should be doing. And folks, I want to just give you, this is not a, this is not a plug for a ministry, but let me just tell you some of the things that are happening now in Times Square Church for the military, the returning veterans in particular. We're visiting veterans in two veterans hospitals at the moment.

We're helping various military organizations with their families and with their celebrations. We're holding a monthly family night at a National Guard Armory where we're teaching soldiers how to love their children with the love of Jesus. We're providing volunteer civilian chaplains for five New York City National Guard units.

We've started in this church a ministry called Mobilize to Serve. It invites veterans, law enforcement officers, and firefighters to serve in disaster relief, local construction, overseas missions, building projects, and more. Mobilize to Serve will rekindle a veteran in the veterans the heart to serve and renew a sense of honor, dignity, and purpose.

A team of 12 was in Bushkill very recently, Pennsylvania, to prepare a Christian camp. As a matter of fact, I think it's this weekend they're preparing a Christian camp for New York City inner children, inner city children, who are going to be there this summer. Homeless veterans Mobilize to Serve will be serving some meals and helping the homeless at the Bowery Mission.

We were invited to hold a monthly chapel service at the Bowery Mission focused on homeless veterans. The homeless veterans from other shelters will be brought to that service and that meal. A few volunteers are going on reconnaissance missions with the Raven Truck Ministry, assessing the needs of veterans served by the Raven Ministry, and plans are in the works to minister to them.

We're preparing care packages for military families at Fort Hamilton. Now, I'm just scanning this as quickly as I can. We are...many homeless and unemployed veterans do not get proper medical care, even if they qualify for it.

We're investigating possible models of medical care for those veterans and other homeless in partnership with Times Square Church's on-call medical ministry. We're looking for ways to expand the national military ministry throughout New York City and the tri-state area. We are one of the churches now that's had training in post-traumatic stress disorder, and one of the churches that various agencies who deal with this are now feeling comfortable to send soldiers here, so they can be incorporated into a larger church body.

They can be helped. They can be blessed. They can be strengthened.

They can be given time to come out of the stresses they experience overseas. You see, it all started because a homeless man on a box challenged my sense of religion, challenged what I was doing, and I'm not going to say that...I think we'd all like to say that we're quick to receive correction. That's that's almost like a Christian catchphrase, but we're really...we're not.

But God, in his mercy, saw fit to put that man on that street, on Broadway, that time. I have often hoped to see him again. I went back and tried to find him.

I'd only ever seen him there one time. I never saw him before, and I've never seen him since. Now, if he was legitimately begging on the street and got \$50 from one passerby, you'd think he'd come back to that fishing spot again.

But folks, is it possible? Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! How well do you take correction? How well? Folks, if we can't be corrected, we're in danger. If you can't be corrected, you're in danger. If you and I ever get to the point of saying, boy, we've arrived.

We're really doing something for God, then we are gravely in danger. Then there's...we are going to be led in a path or direction that we don't want to go on. The war veterans said to me, you know what you should be doing.

Why are you not doing it? And that's the essence of correction, especially in the Christian church. I think of all those people sitting here today. How long do you have to sit in church before you give your life to Jesus Christ? How long do you have to hear these messages? How long will you pass by the testimony of Christ on the cross who gave his life for you? A righteous man paying the price for all the sin that you've ever committed, asking that you open your heart to his lordship, receiving his offer of forgiveness, and then beginning to live for him, letting his life be lived out through you.

A testimony in the earth. How long do you have to hear this before you will do what you know is right? How long can you receive correction? Can your course be changed? I don't care if you've sat in church for 50 years. If you've not opened your heart to Christ, you are none of his and he is none of yours.

You've got to open your heart to Christ. It's not church attendance that gets you to heaven, folks. It's a living relationship with God through his son.

If you are a Christian, you have an inner witness of the Holy Ghost. The Bible says the spirit of God within you cries out, have a father. You know you've been born of God.

You know your life is on another course. You know you're being led by God. Your plans are no longer your own.

You're not charting your own course. You're not creating your own righteousness. You're not defending all of your own actions.

You are walking in the life of another. You are rejoicing daily as you see the life of God being lived out from within you. How long, how long, how long will you wait to do what you know to do? How long will it be before you turn from sin? How many people sitting in this church today, you are in relationships that the Bible forbids.

It says they're wrong. How long, how long, how many times, how many sermons is it going to take for you to get up and do right and get out of that relationship, get away from that practice, leave that immoral thing or whatever it is that you're doing? How long will it take? How long will it take, fellow workers, before you begin to trust God for your finances and stop putting your hand where it shouldn't be? How long will it take to do these things? When will you turn off things that are polluting your mind and polluting your spirit? When will you put away books you shouldn't be reading? When will you stop filling your mind with garbage and then coming and begging God for freedom and relief and some kind of victory when you're willfully choosing to sit at a hog trough from Monday to Saturday? How long will it be before you do what is right? You know what to do. How long will it be before you make the choice to do it? How long will it be before you are reaching out to this hurting world with all the love that Jesus has placed in your heart? How long will you come to God's house with nothing more than a wagon hoping to get something more for yourself? When God says, no, I've given you all you need, you're to take it now to this world that is hurting, starving, and dying.

They need to know they have a Father in heaven, a Savior who died and was raised from the dead. The widows need to know they have a husband. The orphans need to know they have a father.

The oppressed need to know they have a defender. The poor need to know they have a feeder. The naked need to know they have someone with clothing.

And it all comes through the church of Jesus Christ, through your life and through my life. How long, how long, how long will we pass by before we choose to do what is right? I think of all the churches today around the world that have been running the roads for 15 years looking for God, looking for some kind of an experience. When the Lord said, if you will just draw out your soul to the hungry, if you will just give clothing to the naked, if you will just visit those who are sick and in prison, if you will be a voice for the voiceless, if you will offer hope to the hopeless, then you call out to me and I'll say, here I am! Hallelujah! All this searching, all this traveling for what? When Christ sits on the other side of your table saying, try this.

You want to know God? Try this. Try letting your life be touched with the struggles of those that nobody else cares about and everybody else passes by in their day. Have the courage to let God do this through

you.

In a moment I'm going to ask you to stand and I'm going to be opening this altar. In the annex also you can stand between the screens. For those who have hesitated to give their lives to Jesus Christ, you don't have long.

Don't put this off. Bend your knee to God. I have a sense in my heart, there is a husband here today.

You're here with your wife and you have scorned God, you've scorned his house, you've scorned this message, because you're trying to, you've got to hold up this image before your wife. Have the courage today, because you know in your heart, you really do know this is right. You do know it.

Could you have the courage to be humble today? I know, I know your wife is going to say, you see I was right. And you have a, you have a hard, I'm speaking a word of knowledge to somebody, you have a hard time with that. That's the only thing that holds you back from God is the fact that she's going to say, see I was right.

Well, live with it. I hope, I hope to meet the guy in the box again one day, and he will tell me, you see I was right. And I'll tell him first, you know you were right.

And for those who should be turning from sin, the wages of sin is still death. Death to your spiritual life, death to the heart of God, death to everything but just endless useless religious practice. That will live.

Everything else will die. Turn from sin. Trust God for the power to do this.

And for those who just would like to say, God please give me a tender heart for people. And the first part of that is maybe an admission that you don't have it, but He's willing to give it to you. We're going to worship for a little while, and as we do, if the Holy Spirit has spoken to your heart, you need to get right with God in one of these areas as we stand.

Just come to this altar, please, if you will. Let's stand together. Balcony, you can go to either exit.

Make your way down. Main sanctuary, just slip out of where you are. Make your way here, please, if you will.

Annex, you can stand between the screens. Let's take 10 minutes to worship. Praise God.

Give us pure hearts. Let us not lift our souls to another. Give us clean hands.

Give us pure hearts. Let us not lift our souls to another. We bow our hearts.

We bend our knees. O Spirit come make us humble. We turn our eyes from evil things.

O Lord we cast down our idols. Give us clean hands. Give us pure hearts.

Let us not lift our souls to another. Give us clean hands. Give us pure hearts.

Let us not lift our souls to another. God let us be, God let us be, a generation that sees. Seeks your face, O God of Jacob.

God let us be, a generation that sees. Seeks your face, O God of Jacob. Hallelujah, hallelujah.

God let us be, a generation that sees. Seeks your face, O God of Jacob. God let us be, a generation that sees.

Seeks your face, O God of Jacob. God let us be, a generation that sees. Seeks your face, O God of Jacob.

God let us be, a generation that sees. Seeks your face, O God of Jacob. Give us clean hands.

Give us pure hearts. Let us not lift our souls to another. Give us clean hands.

Give us pure hearts. Let us not lift our souls to another. Renew a right spirit within me.

Create in me a clean heart, O God. And renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away.

Cast me not away from Thy presence, O Lord. Take not Thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation.

And renew a right spirit within me. Create in me a clean heart, O God. And renew a right spirit within me.

Create in me a clean heart, O God. And renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away.

Cast me not away from Thy presence, O Lord. Take not Thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation.

And renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from Thy presence, O Lord. Take not Thy Holy Spirit from me.

Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation. And renew a right spirit within me. From Thy presence, O Lord.

Take not Thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation. And renew a right spirit within me.

She made the pursuit of righteousness. My God, renew. Regenerate my heart and make me whole.

You surely know. This morning, how many would have the courage to say, Pastor, I'm done fighting against God. I'm done trying to create my own sense of righteousness.

I mean, acceptance and cleanness in the sight of God. I know I'm a sinner. I need a Savior.

Today, I'm coming to bend my knee to God. Confess that I have a need of a Savior and invite Christ Jesus into my life to be both my Savior and my Lord. I will walk with Him from this day forward as He gives me the strength and shows me the path.

How many today annex Main Sanctuary, whether or not you're at the altar, with an upraised hand can say, Pastor, that's me. Raise your hand nice and high all over the place, all over the sanctuary, all over the dockery. Praise God.

Praise God. So many coming to Christ. Thank God.

Let's pray together now, all of us. Lord Jesus, I am a sinner. I deserve eternal punishment for the things that I have done and the things that I do.

But God, thank you that you so loved me. You came to this earth. You died a terrible death.

To pay the price for all the wrong things that I have done, an innocent man died to spare me from guilt and punishment. At this very moment, I open my heart to you, Jesus, and my life to you. And I invite you to come into my life, to be my Savior and my Lord.

I believe that you are the Son of God. I believe you died in my place. I believe you were raised from the dead on the third day as living proof to me that my trust in you is not in vain.

I believe at this very moment my sins are being washed away. I'm being made new by the Spirit of God. I'm not going to hell when I die.

I'm going to heaven when I die. I'm going to be a new person on this earth, guided by the Word of God, and given power by the Holy Spirit of God. From this day forward, Jesus Christ, you are my God, and my life is in your hands.

Oh, God, thank you for saving me. Now, we have people in the lower lobby for all of those who are receiving Christ that you may want to talk to. If you don't have a Bible, they'll get you one.

They'll answer any questions you have about what you've just done or about this church. They'll give you instruction if you need that. Now, for the rest, you are at this altar because you are children of God.

And God would not be challenging you if you were not His son or not His daughter. You're here because, and thank God you can hear His voice. That's all I can say.

You can hear, and that's a cause to rejoice. That's a cause to be happy. That's a cause to leave this sanctuary today, say, Father, thank you that you so love me, that you're keeping me on a straight course.

Lord, you're helping me. You're guiding me. You're not going to let me go astray.

You're not going to let my heart get caught up with other things. Lord, thank you that you love me. Can you thank Him, those that have come to the altar in the annals? Can you thank Him? Can you just thank God? When you have a tender heart, that is reason to rejoice.

It's not reason to be sad. It's reason to rejoice. You have a tender heart, and God is speaking to that heart.

When you leave this sanctuary, you're not to go out of here with your head hanging down. You're to go out with your hands raised and say, I have a Father who will never, ever fail me. He'll never, ever fail me.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/N-ansFEmmZQ.mp4>

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