

The Glorifying of Leaven

by Carter Conlon

The sermon emphasizes the importance of conquering strong cities in our lives, dealing with sin and pride, and ingesting Christ in order to experience true redemption and victory.

Duration: 56:32

Scripture: Daniel 5:29-30, Matthew 16:6, Matthew 23:4, Luke 13:9, Luke 13:21, 1 Corinthians 5:7

Topics: "Sin"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher begins by recounting the story of Belshazzar and how he was blind to the truth and hardened to the gospel. The preacher then paraphrases Matthew chapter 23, cautioning about the leaven of the Pharisees and describing the characteristics of a Pharisee's heart. The sermon then shifts to the topic of conquering strong cities in our lives, areas that are deeply embedded and cannot be changed without the power of God. The preacher encourages the congregation to have an open heart and trust in God's grace to overcome these strongholds. The sermon concludes with a call to confession and surrender, using the story of Achan in Joshua chapter 7 as an example of the need to let go of everything that is not of God.

Transcript

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However, for all other forms of reproduction or electronic transmission, existing copyright laws apply. Good morning to all of our visitors today. I trust that you've already experienced the life of Christ that is in this house and believe that God will touch you in an increasingly special way before this day is finished.

Now, the Holy Spirit spoke to us at the beginning of 2003 about coming to challenge and to conquer strong cities. Now, strong cities are those areas that are found in all of our lives that are just so deeply embedded in us for whatever reason that it is impossible for these areas to be changed or conquered apart from the prevailing power of God coming and doing it for us. And the Lord said, if you have an open heart, I'm going to come.

I'm going to conquer very strong cities. And they're going to be an incredible freedom that comes because of this. Times Square Church was founded on a foundation of truth, was founded essentially on that scripture that says, whosoever falls on this stone, of course, that stone being Christ shall be broken.

And I remember being here when the brokenness that had come into God's people had reached, as it is, its fulfillment and the end result of God's people being in agreement with his estimation, as it is, of their spiritual condition is an incredible outbreak of joy. The joy that that you and I experience when we meet together in this house. I was here actually when it began to really break out, an incredible joy, when the entire congregation began to leap up and down in the air, beginning to realize that God not only provided our redemption through his son, Jesus Christ, but he provided the power to live the Christian life.

But you have to want the redemption before you can have the power. You have to want to be free before freedom comes. We have to agree with God.

The Bible says clearly that we're to agree with our adversary while we walk in the way, lest we'd be cast into prison. And you understand that there are times when we're not walking in truth, that truth becomes our adversary. And God said, if truth becomes your adversary, agree very quickly, because if you don't, you'll be cast into a horrible prison.

And, of course, that prison is a place of self-righteousness, self-made righteousness. Nobody wants to live there. If you're an honest Christian, you don't want to live there.

There's no joy there. It's hard. It's dry.

It's a finger-pointing place, because the only way you can maintain your righteousness is to point at everyone else's faults around you. It's a terrible, horrible prison. And there are seasons and times when the Holy Spirit must come back and do a work again in his people.

And I believe that we are entering into one of those seasons here at Times Square Church. These are difficult messages to preach, difficult to live. But God in his grace will both allow me to speak this message this morning and allow you to hear it.

And I would promise you today that if you'll open your heart, the end result of what seems to be grievous is joy. The end result is a breaking of shackles. It's a putting off of all disguises.

Nothing more horrible than being a Christian and have to walk into the house of God in disguise. Who do we think we're fooling anyway? I mean, we fool the people beside us, but not God. I mean, this is all about Jesus Christ.

It's about the all-seeing one who created us and knew our hearts before we were even formed in our mother's womb. He knows the thought you're about to think right before you even thought this thought. You're thinking now he knew what you were going to think.

There's nothing hidden from him. And so we see the absolute foolishness of any spiritual disguise. That is really a stronghold that has never been conquered by the love and the power of God.

So I wanted to share that as a foundation for what I'm about to speak today. But I believe the Holy Spirit is going to be going after in the in the next little while here at Times Square Church. Let's pray together.

Father, I thank you for the anointing of the Holy Spirit. I thank you that you love this church. You love us all.

You love us so much that as a father, you will chasten us if necessary. You will come after the things that we are beginning to embrace that will choke the testimony of your life out of us. Because you care.

And Lord, we're coming to your throne today because we know this. We all know that we have failed. In ourselves, we've all fallen short of the glory of God.

But you have made provision for our redemption. And you've made provision for our victory. And so, Lord, it's in this light that we come to your word today.

We don't come to be condemned. We come to be convicted. We come, oh God, to have the light of your heart and truth shine in every area where we have failed of the grace that you have freely given to us.

Lord God, we ask that you would give us the ability to hear, the ability to put off the old nature. And Jesus, that you would be glorified in us. Be glorified in this church.

Be glorified in us corporately as a church body and also individually as Christians. Let the life and the light of Christ be the only thing that emanates from us from this day until you return to take us home. Jesus, thank you for great grace today.

I need great grace. And we need great grace to hear. Father, we thank you for it in Jesus' mighty name.

1 Corinthians chapter 5, please, in the New Testament. 1 Corinthians chapter 5. I'm going to go to read two verses of Scripture. My message title is The Glorifying of Levin.

The Glorifying of Levin, 1 Corinthians chapter 5, verses 6 and 7. Now remember last week, we talked about Joshua and the children of Israel coming into the promised land, winning a marvelous victory at Jericho, only to be defeated by a little city called Ai. It may have been small, but it became a stronghold because in the army of Israel there was a hidden thing. And all of these things in the Old Testament, the Bible tells us, are shadows and types for us who are the church of Jesus Christ.

And sometimes what should be a little thing becomes a stronghold because there is something hidden somewhere. It might be in a remote corner of our conscience. It might be in a faraway place.

We may not think it's even significant. I remember sharing last week that Joshua, for example, looking out over the hundreds of thousands of people that were moving into the place of promise. And God sends them into defeat because in one tent, if you were looking out perhaps over a hillside, you'd have a hard time to even see that tent.

It was so insignificant, so far away. But in that one tent, hidden beneath it, was a deception as it is. And God said, because of this thing, I'm going to let you fall before this small and insignificant city, so that all people everywhere will understand that the victory is won when there is a people who are sincere and

upright.

When God spoke to Abraham and said, I'm going to bless you and I'm going to make you a blessing through all the earth. He said to Abraham, be perfect. The word perfect in the Hebrew is just be sincere and upright.

That's all God has ever asked of you and I. Be honest, in other words. Be honest with me. Let us come and meet face to face.

Let's reason together. Thank God that when he finds a people who have that honest reasoning heart, that he can call something that we are reluctant to call what it is. He can say, I found something in a remote area of your conscience, your heart, your practice.

And you've gotten so used to it that you don't think it's of any consequence. But I have allowed you this struggle. I've allowed it to come into your life so that you will cry out to me and say, where is this and what is it that's causing the defeat? Remember, Joshua went down on his face and began to cry out and bemoan the fact that they were even brought into the place of promise.

And the Lord said to Joshua, get up. And he said, there's a reason why you are suffering a defeat. Now, it wasn't a catastrophic defeat anyway.

I mean, the 36 men, albeit that is tragic for 36 families to lose their father and husband. But considering the tens of thousands of soldiers he had, it was not a catastrophic defeat. But nevertheless, it was a defeat.

And this brought Joshua to the place of agreeing with God that when there is sin hidden in the camp, that the whole camp can be brought into defeat. It only takes one area in our lives for the devil to get in. And once he gets in, it expands.

It begins to affect the mind. It affects the attitude. It affects their actions.

And even worse, it begins to justify itself with religious robes. There's nothing that smells worse than a religious spirit in the house of God. It's a terrible thing if you've ever been in a place like that.

1 Corinthians 5, 6, Paul says, Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ, our Passover, is sacrificed for us.

Now, Paul is saying in verse 6, Your rejoicing and boasting of Christ being your Savior and walking with you is not good. In the original text, what it says in the Greek New Testament is basically that it's not in balance. It's not complete.

Paul says, You are coming together, Corinthian church, and you are raising your hands and you are declaring a testimony of Christ, but your rejoicing is out of balance. There's an incompleteness in it. And he said, Now let me tell you why.

In verse 7, of course, he tells him, he says, Purge out the old leaven. And the word for leaven is sin, which penetrates the daily life. It's everything that disgraces the Christian and takes away from the new life that he's supposed to have in Christ.

But Paul says, There's an old leaven in the middle of you. You are raising your hands. And you see, Paul was concerned because there was a sin which was known to the people and it was not being dealt with.

Now, in this particular case, there was a man, chapter 5, it says it's reportedly, verse 1, commonly that there's fornication among you. And such fornication is not so much as even named among the Gentiles that one should have his father's wife. So here is a man, as it is living in a sexual, incestual relationship with his mother.

And it's in the church. The people are aware of it. But they've become, there's a coldness in the hearts of the people to sin.

I don't know. Maybe there was a point where the people would have been horrified. But along the way, there's always that leaven of the devil wanting to creep into the house of God.

Well, that's just the way things are. Well, our society is different today than they were back then. They were more righteous even before coming to God than we are today.

And God understands all these struggles and all these intertwining excuses. You see, folks, the problem is that nothing has ever changed. Man is just as sinful as he was in the Garden of Eden, just as absolutely deceptive, and God is still as holy.

The power of God is still as real as it always was. Man's intent of his heart to deceive God never changes. That's the greatest deception of all.

I mean, we could speak about all kinds of deception, but imagine trying to deceive God. That is the ultimate foolishness that is found in the heart of man. And this was going on, and Paul says to the church, he says, and you are puffed up, verse 2, chapter 5, verse 2, and you've not rather mourned that he that has done this deed might be taken away from among you.

Now, the word puffed up means you're proud. You're standing with so little concern for the death which is attached to you. That's an incredible thing.

Now, Paul says there's a death. Now, I know the tendency now for everybody is to look to the left and to the right and say, well, what's going on in Times Square Church? It's not what's going on in Times Square Church, it's what's going on in you. It's what's going on in me.

What have we brought into the house of God today that God says is death? And this death is attached to us, but we've become accustomed to it. Oh, well, it's just here, it's always been here, it's going to be here. So, I'm able to worship, so God must be accepting this thing.

I do feel that tingly presence every time I come to Times Square Church, so everything must be all right. I can lift my hands, I can sing the songs, I get excited, I jump up and down. But Paul says, no, this is pride.

You are exalting yourself above the knowledge of God. You are coming into my house and you are making a declaration of worship that God says, I don't agree with it, it isn't true, it's not right. And Paul says, you've not rather mourned.

In other words, you've not yearned that this which so dishonors Christ might be taken away from you. Paul says, what's happened in this particular instance? What's happened to the people that this kind of a thing can come and attach itself to the body? It attaches itself to the personality, to the body, to the practice of

the body. And now I'm talking about everybody, everybody individually in the church of Jesus Christ now.

And Paul says, how come you can come into the presence of God and go through the whole ritual of saying that Christ is your King? How come you can lift your hands and say, He's Lord, He's Savior, He's everything and all to me, and have this death in your midst and you're not mourning about it? Now, the Lord doesn't want us to have our heads hung down every time we come in over every little thing that we've struggled with throughout the week. Yes, there's an understanding that Christ is our righteousness. And if we do have a struggle failing in our lives, that He does provide the grace and the covering in the middle of that struggle.

And He does provide the strength to overcome that struggle. But Paul's not talking about the struggling Christian. This is a blatant sin that's been accepted in the midst of the people.

And Paul says, there should be a mourning. There should be a grief in your heart. Say, Oh God, how could this be part of my life as a Christian? And why should it be there? For example, husbands that are mistreating your wives this morning, and you're mistreating your children, you're verbally abusing the gifts that God has given you in your own house.

You should be mourning. You should not be lifting your hands and rejoicing. If you have made an agreement with this death, Oh yes, if you are believing God to set you free, then raise your hands and rejoice.

But if you are living in agreement with this, and say, Oh well, that's the way I've always been. And that's the way I'm always going to be. Then everybody around me has to learn to live with my vicious temper now.

That's just the way I am. God understands it. I expect everyone else around me to understand it.

And Paul says, No, that's pride. That's exalting oneself against the knowledge of God. You should be mourning.

There should be something in your heart that causes you to weep and say, Oh Jesus, my life is such a disgrace in this area. It falls so short of the glory that you've got for me. This is a city that I have an inability to conquer in my own strength.

Oh Christ, come now and give me the victory. Oh Jesus, if you've got to shame me before my family. God, do whatever you have to do, but give me the victory.

And Paul says, Somewhere along the line you've lost that cry. I think of the multitudes going to the house of God throughout this country today. Multitudes who are drunks.

Multitudes living in adultery. Multitudes who are on the brink of divorce because of an inward deep embedded selfishness that's in the heart. Multitudes that are taking drugs instead of turning to Jesus Christ.

Multitudes living in fornication. And I could go on and on and on. Coming into the house of God.

Singing the songs of Zion. But there's a problem with this. And Paul says, How did this get to be that way in the house of God? He said, Even Christ, in verse 7, our Passover is sacrificed for us.

And Paul, I believe, is asking in a form of rhetorical question. And it's something like this. He says, How shall we not be fully given to the one who fully gave himself for us, for our redemption? How is it that this is only a one-way relationship now in the Corinthian church? How is it that Christ can come to this earth, God Almighty, in the flesh.

Give totally of himself to the last drop of blood and water on the cross on Calvary. And that we can come and give a partial, as it is, yielding of ourselves to the kingdom of God. And say, This is sufficient.

Paul says, No, this is not right. This is not right. This is a pride coming into the presence of God.

Chapter 5, again, verse 8. He says, Therefore, let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. Now, let's keep the feast, Paul says. Christ was sacrificed for us.

It was a total giving of himself. Let's obey God. Now, Paul is referring to the Exodus feast.

You must be familiar with that. Where every family that was about to be released from the grip of Egypt, which, of course, represents the grip of Satan and the grip of darkness, was to eat a lamb in their home, but they were to eat it with unleavened bread. Now, leaven, in the Bible, is yeast.

It refers to fermentation. Leaven is used most often in the context of corruption. And Paul is saying, we are called, as they were, to ingest Christ.

We are called not to have a Christ who is on the outside, that we kind of pick and choose what he says and say, well, I like that. I'll agree with that. I'll incorporate that into my life.

I don't like that. I'm not going there. No, he said, that's hypocrisy.

That's leaven. We are to come to Christ and we are to ingest him. Remember, he said to the crowd, he said, if you don't eat my body and drink my blood, you have no life in you.

You have no life. In other words, he said, it's the whole thing. If you want the redemption, you have to have the ingestion.

You have to go to this book and you have to eat it. In effect, it's got to become part of your life. Christ in us, Paul says, of course, is the hope of glory.

And we are to ingest Christ without hypocrisy. The angel of death was passing over even God's people. And he said, when I find the blood on the door, when I find people in that house eating the lamb, when I find unleavened bread, I pass over that house.

There's going to be nothing but deliverance and victory come to that people. Now, Luke chapter 12, if you'll go back there, Luke chapter 12, verse 1. Now, Jesus said something to the people. He said, in the meantime, when there were gathered together an innumerable multitude of people, insomuch that they trod upon one another, he began to say to his disciples, first of all, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.

There is nothing covered that shall not be revealed, and neither hid that shall not be known. In other words, he says to his disciples, listen, there's a day coming when everything that is hidden by religion is going to be made known. And not only is it going to be made known, but listen to how it's going to be

made known.

Therefore, whatsoever has been spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light, and that which you have spoken in the ear in the closets shall be proclaimed upon the housetops. In other words, it will be public knowledge. God said, whatever has been hidden behind it, I have to expose it for what it is.

Eventually, some men's sins go before and some men's follow after. Jesus tells us to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. The definition of hypocrisy is acting under a pretended part.

Beware that you don't become an actor in the house of God. Incredible, an actor. There's a lot of actors in the house of God.

They all scream at their families all the way to church. The moment they walk in the back door, praise the Lord, how are you doing? God bless you, did you have a good week? Playing the part, the curtain rises, and they're on the stage as it is. As the moment they come in the door, and it's a different person.

The children look back and say, what happened to my father? Acting. You see, the Pharisees, Christ clearly put them before the x-ray machine as it is in God's eyes. And later on said, dear, I'll tell you exactly what you are.

And he explained to them in uncertain terms what exactly was going on inside of them. And he told the church, he's telling first his disciples, then the multitude. But first those that are closest to him, he said, beware that this leaven of hypocrisy doesn't get into you.

Beware that you don't get to a place in some area of your life where you become the great pretender on Sunday morning and Tuesday night. And all around you, I tell you folks, there are many children who don't serve the Lord because of this. Because they see mom and dad or cousin or aunt or guardian, whatever it is.

They see them do one thing in the house of God, but they know the reality is something else. They watch their parents put on their costume in the house of the Lord and come in and do all the Christian thing and raise their hands and praise. But they know that there is a death at work in them.

They've embraced something of death, and they're not mourning over it. There's no cry for change in that area of their lives. The children look at it and draw a conclusion that the whole thing is not real.

They say, well, I'm not interested in acting. I want the real thing or I want nothing. I'm not interested in becoming part of a Christian play on Sunday morning.

He goes on to say in the same chapter, verse 80, he said, Therefore I say to you, whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of God confess before the angels of God. Now, you have many, many people that say, well, Jesus is Lord. But you know that Scripture is interpreted by Scripture.

For Christ himself said, not everyone that says Lord, Lord will enter the kingdom of God. Not ever. So there are people out there confessing Christ is Lord, but they're not going to go to heaven.

When you look a little closer, we find that the definition of the word confess in the Greek New Testament is simply this. It's to publicly acknowledge Christ and to celebrate in fact and in truth with public praises. Now, here's what he's saying.

Whoever comes into my presence or whoever lives their Christian life and there is an aura as it is of true celebration, because in fact and in truth, I am in there and I am subduing every area of their life. I am subduing all of their enemies. I am overthrowing kingdoms.

There is radical change taking place in the temple of the Holy Ghost. I am in there overthrowing the tables, throwing out the money changers and the sellers of doves. I'm driving them out of the temple.

There is radical change going on. Well, they may not be what they hope to be yet, but they are not what they were the day before. There is a change and every increasing change going on in their life.

And this is the confession. He's saying, it's the Christian who comes into my presence and lifts his hands and lifts her voice and is singing praises to God because of the victories that have been won. Lifting their voice with praise to God because of the battle they're in.

But there's a faith in their heart that says, I'm in a struggle. This is a strong city, but I know the outcome because I know my God. Hallelujah.

This death will not attach to me. I will never make peace with it. I will never become complacent until this thing is gone.

Until it's dead. Until it's out of my life. Hallelujah.

This is the confession that Jesus Christ is talking about. It's not just a confession. It's a celebration.

Jesus himself said the Father is searching for people to worship him in spirit and in truth. That means that people who have ingested the truth of God and by the power of the spirit, the truth is becoming a reality in them. That's true worship.

It's change. It's a metamorphosis as it is from the old to the new. Putting away the old man and putting on by God's grace the new man, which is created after true righteousness in Christ Jesus.

Thanks be to God for the incredible grace that he gives that he alone may accomplish this in us by faith. He said, but he that denies me before men shall be denied before the angels of God. Denied in the original text is to reject him either in the face of former relationship or better knowledge.

In other words, he said, there are those who knew who I was or am. They knew about my power. But even in the face of that knowledge, chose to reject it.

They've used me. The second definition is to gain, say, without further consideration of the object. In other words, it means to use Christ to improve one position in life without regard to the true relationship that he requires with those who are his.

And, folks, listen to me. We're living in a generation of people who are using Christ in the house of God, using Christ for success, using Christ for wealth, using Christ for better self-esteem, using Christ, but no regard to the relationship that is required from those who are his. This amounts to nothing less than a denial of Jesus Christ.

It's a denial. Paul warned in the last days there are going to be people who have an incredible form of godliness. Their talk will be godly.

Their dress will be godly. But their lives are a denial of the power of God to transform those who are his. That's what it means.

But they deny the power. They deny the power. Their lives are a denial of the power of God because they've made allegiances with death.

They walk into the house of God and they've either made an allegiance because they feel the battle is too strong or they've made an allegiance because that's just the way they want to be. And he said they shall be denied before the angels of God. And the context is denied future hope and redemption.

Incredible. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. You see, covenant is a marvelous truth.

The truth of the New Testament covenant shows us the grace, the incredible grace of God to forgive and the incredible power by faith to change. It's all God really. We come bankrupt.

We have no resources. We give our lives to him and we trust his words to us that he comes by the power of the Holy Spirit and performs it all that he might be glorified in us. Incredible, wonderful truth.

But we must never take that truth and abuse that grace because the fear of the Lord is still the beginning of wisdom. God says, yes, I'm extremely gracious, but I'm also holy. I'm also God of truth.

And whatsoever is not of truth is not going to stand before me in the last day. And whosoever has professed my name, but their lives have denied the power that I give to those that are mine. I will deny them before the angels of God in heaven.

Incredible truth. Now go with me in the Old Testament to Daniel, please. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel.

Daniel, Chapter 5. Now, this is the end of the Babylonian kingdom. There was a co-regent, a co-ruler over Babylon at this time, and his name was Belshazzar. And he did something that brought about the end of his kingdom.

We do well to take heed. Belshazzar, Daniel, Chapter 5, Verse 1. The king made a great feast to a thousand of his lords and drank wine before the thousand. And Belshazzar, while he tasted the wine, commanded to bring the golden and silver vessels, which his father Nebuchadnezzar, or his grandfather actually, had taken out of the temple, which was in Jerusalem, that the king and his princes and his wives and his concubines might drink therein.

And they brought the golden vessels that were taken. Now, this is out of Solomon's temple, from the house of God, which was at Jerusalem. And the king and his princes and his wives and his concubines drank in them.

And they drank wine and they praised the gods of gold, silver, brass, iron, wood, and stone. In the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaster of the wall of the king's palace. And the king saw the part of the hand that wrote.

Now, there's a search in the New Testament called Ephesus, where the Lord said, I know your works and I know what you've done and I know your labor and I know how you're born. He said, but I have something against you. You've left your first love.

Now, in the context of what we're reading, we could say that leaving that first love. You remember when you first came to Christ and all we wanted was to be free. Paul, where there was a sense of victory, an ominous sense of victory, that the devil had finally seen his last, that his reign in our lives was over.

It was finished. He had been openly spoiled at Calvary. And we were going to be new creations in Christ.

And that has to be the first love. It has to be. Now, obviously, there's a deeper context because we can say without any hesitation that Christ loved us before we loved him.

But in the context of that love, there's a freedom that comes to the Christian church. And now he says, you're doing all these things, but you've left your first love. And he said, if you don't repent and understand from where you've fallen, I'm going to come and take your candlestick away.

Now, that was the New Testament church of Ephesus. Here is Belshazzar and he is having a feast with the things of God. He's using the holy vessels for his own glory and his own gain.

He has turned the worship of Christ into the worship of gold and the worship of silver and the worship of wood. The worship of things of the world as it is. Everything that the world says will make you happy and grant you fulfillment.

Belshazzar has now changed the form of worship and he's using the holy things. That's when the hand of God comes and writes on the wall right near the candlestick and said, this is finished. It is over.

Oh, beloved, I believe right now the handwriting is on the wall for the whole faith and prosperity movement in the Western world. The handwriting of God is on the wall because they have taken the holy things of God and they have turned it into praise of gold and silver and wood and the work of men's hands. There comes a point where God says, enough.

I've numbered your kingdom and I've finished it. It's over. Now, Daniel came to Belshazzar and he said, Belshazzar, you had a grandfather.

He calls him a father, but it's a type in a sense. They use that word for male lineage. And he says, Nebuchadnezzar knew because God dealt with him.

And when his mind was heart was lifted up in his mind, hardened in pride, God took him off of his throne and they took his glory and he was driven out and he was made to understand that the most high God rules in the kingdom of men and he gives it to whomsoever he will. Then in verse 22, he says, And you, his son, O Belshazzar, you've not humbled your heart, though you knew all of this. Belshazzar, you knew this.

You were taught this. Your grandfather passed on this knowledge of God to you. And you knew that God was a mighty God.

You knew that God had the right to every king, to every throne, to every life. You knew this, but you made a choice to take the holy things of God and to use them now for your own betterment and your own pleasure. And he says, You, his son, O Belshazzar, has not humbled your heart, though you knew this.

And you've lifted yourself up against the Lord of heaven. And they have brought the vessels of his house before you, you and your lords, your wives, your concubines, and have drunk wine in them. You've praised the gods of silver, gold, brass, iron, wood, stone, which don't see, hear, or know, and the God in

whose hand your breath is and who are all your ways you have not glorified.

Then was the part of the hand sent from him, and this writing was written. Verse 26, he says, This is the interpretation. God has numbered your kingdom and finished it.

You are weighed in the balance, verse 27, and found wanting. Verse 28, Your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians. Then, verse 29, you would think the Bible would say, Then.

Then Belshazzar repented. Then he fell on his face and said, O God, forgive me for my ignorance. You know, there's a point of being gospel-hardened, folks, that no matter what is preached, it doesn't make any difference anymore.

It's so dangerous to reject truth. He knew the truth. And Daniel says, You rejected the truth.

And because you rejected the truth, you became hard, and you allowed the issues of your own heart to come now and take preeminence over truth. And you created another system of worship. This is the greatest sin of America, Canada, and much of the Western world, who knew the truth, but allowed the human heart to circumvent those things that God had clearly spoken in the past and come and made another God.

That fit the pursuits of the human heart. I can pursue gold and still be accepted with God. I can pursue my own pleasure, my own will, my dreams, my ambitions.

It can be all about me, and somehow God is still involved in it. He says, Belshazzar, you knew this. You knew it, but you made choices.

And because of these choices, your kingdom is over. Now, what does Belshazzar do? Incredible, it says, he commanded that they clothe Daniel with scarlet and put a chain of gold around his neck and made a proclamation concerning him that he should be third ruler in the kingdom. Verse 30 says, In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans, or the Babylonians, slain, and Darius the Median took the kingdom, being about three score and two years old.

Incredible. He gets this word of God, and he's so hardened that he promotes the very man who's just declared the end of his kingdom. Folks, there are people here today, I hope there aren't, but there could be people today that walk out of this place with a handful of tapes.

And you could say, let's say you could be extremely gracious to me and say, Pastor Carter is the third best preacher that I've ever heard in my life. Next, of course, is so-and-so from the Faith and Prosperity Movement and so-and-so from this other organization over here. He is the third best.

You should come to Times Square Church. Incredible gospel is being preached there. But promoting the very man who's just told you that you're going to die in your sin.

The same man promoting could be an adulterer, a homosexual who's still in this practice, somebody who's practicing deception and theft in the workplace, walks out, or stuck on internet pornography, or living in adultery, and goes out and passes tapes out. And promotes the man and promotes the church. Oh, it's such a good church.

The word of God is preached there. But the word of God has not brought about any change in your kingdom. Incredible.

Incredible. Daniel has just told Belshazzar, your days are over, you're finished. And he stands up and says, give him a golden chain, and give him a new robe, and make him third ruler in my kingdom.

Totally hardened to the gospel. Totally blind to the truth that was trying to move him. But it was, God is always trying to move, but this man was beyond being touched anymore.

Jesus cautioned about the leaven of the Pharisees. I'm just going to paraphrase some things for you, to have you understand what happens, and makes the Pharisees hard. It all comes from Matthew chapter 23.

Please don't turn there, just let me paraphrase it. You can listen to the tape some other time, and go over the scriptures. But verse 4, he says, you are a partaker of nothing that you teach.

The Pharisees, he says, you put weighty things on people, you talk of a standard, but you don't lift a single finger to do it yourself. You're Bible literate. You understand what the scripture says, but you're not a partaker of it.

That's 11 of the Pharisees. Verse 5 to 7, he says, you're consumed with what people think of you, and you lust for recognition as a spiritual person. Oh folks, if you are more concerned about what people think of you here today, in this sanctuary, than what God thinks about you Monday night at 11 o'clock, you have a problem in your heart.

Verse 14, your prayers mask a self-indulgent spirit. He said, you make long, long prayers, but you would devour widows' houses, given the opportunity. You would gorge and take in everything that you can to yourself, but you make long, long prayers to try to hide it.

Verse 15, he says, you make those around you that you influence exactly what you are. You have a zeal, but it's not according to righteousness. You travel the earth to make one convert.

And then Jesus went on, and he said it very strongly. He said, you make him twice the child of hell that you have become. Verse 16 to 22, he tells the Pharisees that money is at the center of your worship.

Oh, folks, there's entire movements now. They're on television all over America now. There's entire movements that money is the center of their worship.

You don't even have to have any discernment anymore to see it. They can never mention the American dollar without going on for 25 minutes about it, inventing all kinds of promises for those that will give to them. It's the center of their worship.

Verse 23, he said, you tithe, but you bring no true judgment, mercy or faith into your fellowship with either God or man. In other words, you won't allow truth to judge you. And so because of that, you don't know the mercy of God, and you are locked out of the faith that God says will cause me to give you the victory.

So you bring in a sense of obedience, but there is really no true presence of God in any of your fellowship. Either with God or with man. Verses 25 to 28, he says, your righteousness is only exterior, and inside is hypocrisy and iniquity.

In other words, there's a lawlessness in you. There's no restraint. There's no control.

There's no presence of God. There's no victory. There's no strong cities falling.

There's no true testimony of the inward life of Christ. Now, this is the leaven that Christ warned about. He said to his disciples, beware of this leaven.

And he's not talking about just see them and point them out. He's talking about you beware of the leaven. You beware that that leaven doesn't get into you and begin to ruin the whole lump.

Now, go very quickly to Joshua chapter 7. And in Joshua chapter 7, we're going to see why the old nature must be put away with such a ferocity. It must be dealt a death blow. You cannot compromise with your old nature.

Paul said, reckon yourself dead. Reckon this old nature dead. There's nothing of it that can be brought into the kingdom of God.

There's nothing of me or you that can benefit God's kingdom except the heart of faith. Everything else has to go. Everything that we thought was good has got to go.

Joshua 7. Joshua says to Achan verse 19. He said, oh, I pray thee give glory to the Lord and make confession and tell me what you've done. Don't hide it from me.

Then he confesses what he has done. He said in verse 21. When I saw among the spoils a goodly garment, 200 shekels of silver and a wedge of gold, I coveted them and took them and they're hidden in the earth in the midst of my tent and the silver under it.

So Joshua sent messengers and they ran into the tent. And behold, it was hidden in his tent and the silver under it. And I guess I'm one of those messengers today that sent from the Holy Ghost to go to your tent wherever you live and to dig underneath that thing to see what is under there.

Why has there been a defeat? Why are you living in such constant defeat in some areas of your life? And they took them out of the midst of the tent and brought them to Joshua and all the children of Israel. And they laid them out before the Lord. And Joshua and all Israel with him took Achan, the son of Zerah, the silver, the garments, the wedge of gold, his sons, his daughters, oxen, asses, sheep, tent and all that he had.

They brought them to the Valley of Achor, which is the valley of trouble. Joshua said, Why has thou troubled us? The Lord will trouble you this day. And all Israel stoned him with stones and burned them with fire after they had stoned them with stones.

And they raised over him a great heap of stones unto this day. So the Lord turned from the fierceness of his anger. And wherefore the name of the place was called the Valley of Achor unto this day.

You see, God was showing a type to you and I. If you're going to know victory, the sin, the little sin has got to be dealt with, with ferocity. There has to be a death blow to it, not a compromise with it. Sometimes we get to thinking, Well, if I just confess it every week that everything is OK, I'll go back to it.

But I'll come back. God will always be merciful. Failing to understand that there's a layer and layer of hardness that begins to come into the heart with this kind of a practice.

If I am a child of God, I want the sin in my life dealt with. I don't want to stand at January 1st, 2004 and be the same man in this area of my life or these areas that I am today. I want there to be a change.

There's a cry in my heart. This is Christ of the Bible. Christ who sits at the right hand of power, who's my Lord and Savior.

Come into this temple and overthrow it. Overthrow it violently if you have to. Take the whip once again and turn over the tables.

The things that I've accommodated, the practices that I've begun to do, that I have convinced myself are acceptable, but you say are not. Take the scourge to it, O God, and get it out of my life. Joshua says, Why have you troubled us? The Lord will trouble you this day.

That's the type of the man that says, O divided heart, you have troubled me long enough. O divided wicked heart, O wretched man that I am, Paul says, who will deliver me from the body of this death? Thanks be to God, he says through Jesus Christ. O divided heart, you've troubled me long enough.

God will overthrow you and God will raise over you such power that you'll not be able to rise again to trouble me. They threw over Achan a great heap of stones unto this day. God says, I'll not only overthrow it if you'll come to me and confess your sin, but I will bury it under such a pile of truth and conviction that it will not be able to rise and trouble you again.

Hallelujah. I will take truth upon truth and cast it upon it. And you will have power to stand and to resist all the weapons of darkness that the enemy forms against you in this area of your life.

Hallelujah. Paul says, purge out the old leaven. Now I want to show you very quickly and conclude with showing you how in Luke chapter 13.

I'd be amiss if I preached this and didn't tell you how. How do we purge out the old leaven? He gives it very, very clearly in Luke chapter 13. Oh, thanks be to God.

There's some areas of my own heart, I'm saying, oh Lord Jesus, burn it. Burn it with your fire. It has troubled me.

Throw it into the valley of trouble and pile stones on it that it can't rise again. Cast down its imaginations. Luke 13, 18.

Then it said he, unto what is the kingdom of God like and where unto shall I resemble it? It's like a grain of mustard seed which a man took and cast into his garden and it grew and waxed a great tree. And the fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it. Now he says the kingdom that I come to grow and establish in a man's heart starts with just the littlest seed of faith.

Now in that man's garden there could be areas of barrenness, there could be weeds, it could be something he's tried to cultivate time and again and it's simply not growing. But my kingdom begins with this man taking this little seed of faith in the fact that I have already won the victory. I have already promised that if he will deal with me in an upright and sincere manner that I will come into his life and I will overthrow these old areas and cause something new to begin to grow.

Not only does it grow but it will overtake the garden and it will become a place of rest and shade for others who are in need of it. It's a man who cast this mustard seed who desires new life even into the most barren area of his heart. It begins today for some to say God I have made peace with this death long enough.

I am sick of this thing, I'm tired of it. But Lord you say that you have bought me the freedom. You say that on Calvary you triumphed over all of my enemies.

You say that if I will just cry out to you even with the little bit of faith that I have left that you will come and something will grow that vastly overpowers all of this other that's in my life and in my heart. And God I believe it. You see that's where it starts.

Then he goes on and he finishes it out and he says, and again he said, Where unto shall I liken the kingdom of God? Verse 20, Luke 13. It is like leaven. Now in this case we're using leaven in a positive context.

Which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal. Now interesting to note that we are essentially made of three things. Body, soul and spirit.

He said it's like a woman who took and hid three leaven in three measures of meal until the whole was leavened. In other words she believed. God I have no power to change but you have said that you will change me.

And she took that little bit of, in this case it's if I can call it a positive leaven. And she took it in and the whole of her life was transformed. Her emotions.

Because her emotions of course affect the body. She was given a new spirit, a new mind, a new heart. Given new life.

And he said if you invite me in in sincerity and truth. I will not stop working in you until all of you is changed. Until you are transformed.

And then you can come into my house and sing the songs of Zion and raise your hands and shout. And confess me before men because I am of truth in you. And moment by moment, image by image, line by line, glory by glory.

My kingdom is coming into your life. And you are changing. You are becoming a new creation.

You are born again. By the power of God. Hallelujah.

Hallelujah. My altar call today is very very simple. Please listen carefully.

I need to change. In this area of my life. I have made an agreement with death.

But by God's grace this agreement will not stand. I am trusting God to overthrow the stronghold in my life. I have no strength to overcome it.

But I have a seed of faith. And I desire by God's grace to take the truth that I have heard and bring it into my entire experience as a Christian. And I am believing that God will cause a new life to grow in me in this area.

And overthrow this wicked city. And give me the victory. When the sin of Achan was dealt with.

The Lord gave Joshua a marvelous battle plan. Which drew the enemy out of the city. And the whole city was burnt with fire and destroyed.

And that's exactly what God will do. For these strongholds in your life. He will give you a marvelous battle plan.

It's all in here. He will raise a testimony of his grace over that area. And you will shout and sing in this house like you've never shouted and sang in your entire life.

You will rejoice. Because you can say. Thy kingdom has come.

Thy will is being done in me. As it is in heaven. If the Holy Spirit is drawing you today.

You need to turn away from an area in your life that is death. You need to get right with God. It begins today.

In agreeing with God. Not only agreeing with the conviction of Christ. But agreeing with the promise that God says I'm going to give you new life in that area.

If the Holy Spirit has convinced you. That you need that today. I'm going to ask that you stand.

And make your way to this altar. Education annex. You can go between the screens.

We'll pray there with you momentarily. Let's all stand together. Balcony.

You can go to either exit. Main sanctuary. Just slip out wherever you are.

Unashamedly. Pastor you've preached. Right to my situation.

The word of God has come right to my tent. You've uncovered something in my heart. The Holy Spirit has.

I want it out of my life. I want the Holy Ghost to take it to the valley of trouble. I want him to burn it out of me.

And throw a heap of God's truth on it. That it never rise against me again. Now I promise you that God will not disappoint you.

God will not disappoint you. He never makes promises. And it doesn't fulfill them.

This is how you begin to know the miraculous from the ordinary. This is how you begin to know life from the religious. The religious man covers it up.

He covers it up with a false garment. The Christian covers it up in a sense with a pile of truth. That it can't rise again.

There is such a difference. Such a difference in the Christian life. Hallelujah.

You know the difference between the Old Testament and the New. In the Old Testament when Achan confessed his sin, he was destroyed. But in the New Testament when we confess our sin, he is faithful and just.

He cleanses us from all unrighteousness. Thanks be to God it's not we who are destroyed. It's the sin in us that God destroys.

What an incredible difference. Thanks be to God. There is no need to fear when you come to God.

There is no need to be afraid when you come and confess. And say Lord I don't want this in my life anymore. God says thank you.

I don't want it there either. Now we can walk together in agreement. And now you watch what the Lord is going to do.

The Lord is going to give you the victory. I believe that with all my heart. Please pray with me now.

Lord Jesus. Thank you so much. For setting me free.

From the indwelling power. Of sin. For setting me free.

From practicing. And living in agreement. With something that offends you.

And it offends your new life. That you have given to me. I repent of my sin.

I make a conscious decision. To turn away from it. That it may grieve neither you.

Nor me. Any longer. I realize.

That I am powerless. To overcome this. But you have promised me.

If I would be sincere. If I would be upright. You would bless me.

With your life. Your victory. And your presence.

And you would make my life. A blessing. To people all around me.

Take this area of my life. Let your kingdom come to it. By the power of Christ.

Holy Spirit. I ask you now. To totally overthrow it.

I ask you to defeat it. I ask you to burn it out of me. By the power of God's grace.

I ask you to put upon it. A heap of truth. That it cannot rise again.

To trouble my life. I believe. Because I have reached out.

And trusted Christ. That at this very moment. Though I may not be experiencing.

The total fruit. I believe. That the mustard seed.

Of faith is in my heart. The kingdom of God. Is growing.

In this area of my life. And I believe. That from this moment forward.

Thank you Lord. Thank him. Thank him now.

Thank him and praise him. Thank him for his goodness. Thank him.

Thank you Lord. Hallelujah. Thank you Jesus.

Thank you God for what you are going to do here. In this house Lord. Thank you Jesus.

God we praise you. We bless you Lord. We bless you mighty God.

We thank you in Jesus mighty name. Hallelujah. Hallelujah.

This is the conclusion of the message. This is the conclusion of the message.

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