

When Corruption Turns to Revelation

by Carter Conlon

The sermon warns of the danger of corruption in the heart of a Christian and emphasizes the importance of recognizing God's sovereignty and grace.

Duration: 54:47

Scripture: 1 Chronicles 21:1-4, Daniel 10:3-6, 1 Peter 1:4-5

Topics: "Revelation"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of being honest with ourselves and recognizing the presence of pride in our hearts. He refers to the story of Nebuchadnezzar and how Daniel warned him about the consequences of his pride. The speaker then shifts the focus to the importance of seeking God and being humble before Him. He shares the example of Daniel, who sought God diligently and was rewarded with divine revelation and understanding of future events. The speaker warns against the danger of pride and self-righteousness, urging listeners to acknowledge their need for God's grace and to avoid seeking validation from others.

Transcript

When corruption turns to revelation, 1st Chronicles chapter 21, beginning at verse 1. And Satan stood up against Israel and provoked David to number Israel. And David said to Joab and to the rulers of the people, Go number Israel from Beersheba even to Dan, and bring the number of them to me, that I may know it. And Joab answered, The Lord make his people a hundred times so many more as they be.

But my Lord the King, are they not all my Lord's servants? Why then doth my Lord require this thing? And why will he be a cause of trespass to Israel? Nevertheless, the King's word prevailed against Joab. Wherefore, Joab departed and went throughout all Israel and came to Jerusalem. I want to speak to you today about a grave danger that lies beneath the surface of the heart of every man or woman who has been gifted by grace with some measure of success as a Christian.

Now, if you're not saved here today, obviously, there's still a measure that you can glean from what you're about to hear today. You can come to the understanding that God loves you, is willing to save you, and multiply your life by the presence of his life within you, and give you hope in the future. But I want to focus today on a message that really hits the heart of those who have had some measure of success.

By a measure of success, I mean that you have grown in the grace and the knowledge of Jesus Christ. And you can look in the mirror in the morning and you can acknowledge, I am more than I used to be. There has been a change because the Bible says if anyone is in Christ, they become a new creation.

The old things and then pass away and behold, all things become new. If you're not changing, if you've been a professing Christian as it is for five years and you're not changing, it's doubtful that the spirit of God is actually within you. If the spirit of God is in you, you are changing.

You are growing as you begin to behold Jesus Christ. The Bible says we are changed from image to image and glory to glory, even as by the spirit of the Lord. It is simply non-negotiable that a person can call themselves a Christian and not be changing.

Now, by changing, I mean we are leaving the limitations of our natural man as it is, that which is what we are without Christ. The way we think, the way we acted, the very inner core and motivations of what caused us to be and do the things that we did. The impresses as it is that this society has placed upon us begin to change and we begin to become more like Christ, not because of human effort.

It's because we simply believe the promises that God has made to us. And God, in the form of the Holy Spirit within us, makes these promises that we believe by faith a reality within us. We just simply read it.

We believe it. We come to God with our heart of faith, without human effort, because human effort cannot change itself. We cannot change ourselves.

We cannot make ourselves godly. It is not possible. The best we can do is become religious hypocrites.

True change comes by faith with this inward working of God who makes that faith a reality. That's what makes the new covenant good news. The old covenant was not good news.

Peter called it a yoke which neither we nor our fathers could bear. Six hundred and something laws that the people had to fulfill every day. Taking inventory at the end of the day only to find that they had failed in numerous areas.

And it was an impossibility really to obey the laws of God. But God, in his mercy, made a way that he himself could come and live within us. And that's the miracle of our salvation.

Not just saved, but God Almighty is living within us. And every promise that he makes to the New Testament believer, the scripture says, is yea and amen. And we change from image to image and glory to glory.

We are not yet everything we should be. I don't think anybody here is. And if you think you are, you're sadly mistaken.

You're back in the beginning. You've got to start all over again. But we are not what we were yesterday.

Glory be to God. We are changing. It's not an easy process.

Yes, it's a hard journey sometimes. And we have to be led through valleys and places that we don't want to go. And the journey through the human heart is a despicable journey.

It's not a nice journey. When God, by his grace, takes us on a vacation through our own hearts and begin to see what's really inside of us. Now, one day, just as happened to David and was in measure, I suppose, happening to the people of Israel.

That's why God allowed Satan to rise up and to bring Israel as it is into a test. This same man who's changing by grace and has experienced a measure of success looks in the mirror and he begins to view himself in a manner that has moved beyond that which is actually true. And this is what was happening to David.

And, of course, one of the books ascribes it to Satan. Another one says that God allowed this test to come. And in any event, even if Satan was the instrument, God still he still can't move without the hand of God, allowing him to be the one who brings the tempting as it is.

Just rising up one morning and saying, we've experienced so many victories. And instead of just simply giving the glory to God, says, let's take an inventory of where our strength is. And let's let's look at how many of us there are.

And let's see what the strategies have been that we have used to bring about so many glorious victories. And David's heart was beginning to move him away from the simplicity of the fact that God was with him. And when he called Joab in to number the people of Israel, Joab knew immediately what this was going to mean.

And Joab said, listen, we're not as much as the enemies we fight, but God makes us a hundred times more than we are. Why should we then number ourselves? Why should we begin to look within ourselves as if in our own selves there's some measure of goodness or strength? It's God that makes us more than we are. We mustn't do this because if we do this, Joab said, it's going to be a cause of trespass against the Lord.

But the king's word prevailed and Joab went out and and numbered those that he felt that he should. He brought it back to the king. And of course, you know, the rest of the story, verse seven tells us that God was displeased with this thing and therefore he smote Israel.

And verse 14 says the Lord sent pestilence upon Israel and there fell of Israel 70,000 men. The Lord says, if if you're beginning to think that the victory that you have experienced has come because of your own strength, I have to show you something. And a pestilence came in and 70,000.

I can just imagine how David is feeling as he as he watches the very people around him beginning to die. 70,000 people, a plague coming in. The Lord, in a sense, saying I gave you strength and I can take it away anytime I want to.

I gave you victory and I can take it away. If you begin to look away from me, if you begin to look in the mirror and begin to see something in the natural man that that I've not determined should be there, then I can quite easily and quickly take your strength away. Now, if you go ahead in the book of Daniel, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and then you have lamentations and Daniel chapter two.

Now, this is a story about a king. Now, keep in mind, we're talking about when corruption turns to revelation, a king called Nebuchadnezzar. And Daniel, being a prophet of God, gave this king a revelation of himself and of the future.

And Daniel chapter two and verse thirty one. Daniel says, Thou, O king, sawst and beheld a great image. This great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee and the form thereof was terrible.

The image's head was of fine gold and his breast and his arms of silver and his belly and his thighs of brass, his legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay. Thou sawst until that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay and break them to pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver and the gold broken to pieces together and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors.

And the wind carried them away that no place was found for them. And the stone that smote the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth. This is the dream.

And we will tell the interpretation thereof before the king. Verse thirty seven. Daniel says, Thou, O king, are the king of kings, for the God of heaven has given thee a kingdom, power, strength and glory.

And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beast of the field and the fowls of heaven hath he given into thine hand and hath made thee rule over all. Thou art this head of gold. Now you see, Daniel was giving this king Nebuchadnezzar a revelation not only of himself, but of the future.

He told he showed him, he said that you are you are one of many that God has established. Now, think of this in the context of you and I, even in the sanctuary today. We are just one of many.

We might be a leader in a certain regard or maybe a leader in our home. Could be a leader in your community, could be a leader of a small ministry in the church of Jesus Christ. But whatever position you have, you were placed there.

The scripture says conclusively by the anointing of God and by the choice of the Holy Spirit. And Daniel was giving Nebuchadnezzar a revelation that there is a king who is much greater than you are. And this king in his mercy has given you this kingdom over which you preside.

And he's given you a kingdom and he's given you your power and your strength and your glory. And you see, Nebuchadnezzar knew that this kingdom had been given to him as a gift. And the God whose kingdom had given it to him was a God whose kingdom was greater than his own.

Because in verse 44, it says in these days, in the days of these kings, shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed. And the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms. And it shall stand forever.

And Daniel was saying, Nebuchadnezzar, you are placed in the place you are by the grace and the glory of God. But one day your kingdom will be over. And a kingdom much greater than every kingdom that will ever be known in the realms of man will come.

This is a stone that is not carved with the hands of man. And it will smash every kingdom in a sense it will be greater and dominate every kingdom that has ever ruled in the face of this earth. And Nebuchadnezzar was given this revelation.

Now this revelation should have humbled him. This revelation should have brought him into a place of acknowledging the supremacy as it is of the glory of God. Acknowledging that where he was, was a position of grace.

That what he had, had been given to him. He had not achieved it. Although he might have had a mighty army, he could have had political alliances and such like things as he had become familiar with in his day.

But God was speaking through Daniel and telling him, what you have has been given you of God. And it's important for you and I to recognize this day. No matter how God uses us.

No matter where he takes us. No matter what he does through our lives. What we have has been given us of God.

It is mercy and grace that has made us and will make us what we are and where we will go. Individually as the individual Christian or collectively as a church. If God gives Times Square Church preeminence, even in parts of the church world for a season.

We must remember that it is God in his mercy that has placed us where he has seen fit for a time and a season. It is strictly by grace. We have not earned it.

We have not deserved it. It is the grace. It is the mercy of God.

And where he places us, he places us so that you and I might be a testimony of this grace to our generation. It should cause us to fall on our faces and say, Jesus, thank you for your mercy. That you could take a wretch like me.

That you could anoint me with your Holy Spirit. That you could begin to change me. And you begin to mold me.

And you begin to make me another person than the person that I was and am when I first came to you. And you begin to use my life for your glory. You expand the borders of my mind and my heart.

You give me a largeness of ability and understanding that I know doesn't come from my natural man. And you send me out, oh God, as a testimony of your glory and your grace. And you give me the opportunity to be part of a kingdom much larger than anything I could ever produce or even think about with my own natural mind.

It should cause me to fall on my face and begin to worship God. And the scripture says in Daniel 2.46, King Nebuchadnezzar fell on his face. And he worshipped in a sense, but the scripture says he worshipped Daniel.

That's an interesting thing. It brought him to worship, but it was not the right kind of worship. Now, I'm sure Daniel, diplomatically, of course, because he's the king, would have told him, listen, I'm just a man.

It's not me that you must worship. It's the God of heaven that I spoke to you about. But this king still had a human focus.

Even in his worship, he was focused on man. And I dread to think of the number of people today who are like this. Even in the church of Jesus Christ, who worship, but they still have a man focus.

They still, if given the chance, will bow before man. When really, all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. If we had spiritual eyes, you'd see every man, every woman, anybody who stands with any kind of anointing, is a graceless wretch without the glory and grace of Almighty God.

Without the Spirit of God. Without the cleansing of the blood of Jesus Christ. We'd see that we are all on level ground.

Failed and fallen. Fragile and futile. Just hopeless without God.

And God, in his mercy, takes one and anoints them. Only that we might change into his image and bring glory to his name and be an encouragement to his people. And as king fell on his face, you would think that it would bring him into a place of humility.

That God had given him a kingdom and God was using him. And God even spoke about his kingdom in some measure for days to come. And so what does he do? Daniel chapter 3 verse 1. Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold.

Remember, Daniel told him, you are the head of gold. And so what he does, he makes an image of himself. Whose height was three square cubits.

I think that's about 60 something feet. You know, men always create an image of themselves bigger than they are. And the breadth thereof six cubits and set it up in the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon.

Then Nebuchadnezzar the king. Scripture says, well, let's go to verse 5. And he called everybody together. And he said, at the time you hear the sound of the cornet, the flute, the harp, the sackcloth, the psaltery, the dulcimer and all kinds of music.

You fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king has set up. And whoso falleth not down and worship it shall be the same hour cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. That's exactly where flesh will take you.

Sets up an image of himself and he requires everybody around him to acknowledge his image. I want you to think about this. You know, folks, if you think we look at Nebuchadnezzar and say, what a foolish man, you know, setting up an image of himself and then requiring everybody around.

You know, when he strikes up the band, as it is to bow down to this image. But if you and I are going to be honest at the core, at the bottom of every human heart, there is a little Nebuchadnezzar band just waiting to strike up a tune. You come into church on Sunday morning and the usher says, I'm sorry, you can't sit here.

This is good. This seat's not for you today. And you'd say, well, what do you mean I can't sit here? This is my regular seat.

Do you not know who I am? And all of a sudden, this little band starts playing clang, clang, clang, bow, bow. Come to the house of God. You've had a good week.

You've gone on a missions trip. You've read your Bible a little more than normal. You've shared maybe some of your wealth with a poor person.

And you come in and just can't wait to tell somebody about it. And the first thing in the morning, you come in and you start telling them how holy you've been all week. You wouldn't say it that way, but you want people to think that.

And how you gave this last five dollars to this poor man and how you did all of this. And all the time you're speaking, you're building up your self-image. Forgetting you stand by grace.

Forgetting you don't even deserve to be in the house of God, but by the grace of God. And your little band begins to play. And deep in the heart, it's bow down, bow down.

Acknowledge that I'm a man or woman of God. Acknowledge that there's a holiness of God upon me. And when they won't bow down and the person seems somewhat disinterested in what you're saying, then all of a sudden, the same thing, it's inevitably, you're toast.

You're toast. I'm not going to talk to you anymore. I'm not going to waste my time.

Here I'm sharing the deepest things of the holiness and how God has used me. And you're not even interested in listening to me. Folks, be honest today.

Be honest this morning. There's an Ebuchadnezzar band just waiting to play a tune in every one of our hearts here this morning. We need to be careful.

We keep them in the orchestra pit where they belong. Now Daniel warned him. Daniel warned Ebuchadnezzar what was going to happen to him.

But the inner corruption in him was too strong. In Daniel chapter 4 and verse 27, Daniel said to Nebuchadnezzar, now he warned him. He gave him very, very clear warning.

He said, listen, if you don't turn from this, the Lord is going to humble you. And it's going to be a long journey. It's going to be a hard journey.

You're going to be severely humbled by the hand of God. But Nebuchadnezzar was just too in him. In verse 27, he said, Wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee and break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquity by showing mercy to the poor.

It may be a lengthening of thy tranquility. Now, he's got a word from God, just like you and I do today. Be careful of this thing God is saying.

Be careful of the secret pride that's getting a hold of your heart. Be careful of this, of this, this, this secret inner desire to have people acknowledge you every time you walk into a room. Be careful of this.

You're starting a little parade. You're becoming bigger than you are in the sight of God. And at the end of the 12 months, verse 29 says, He walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon.

And the king spake and said, Is not this great Babylon that I have built for the house of the kingdom of the might of my power and the honor of my majesty? Now, here he's been warned, but the corruption is just too great within him. He cannot resist the temptation to say, even though he had this word that you have what you have by the grace of God. This this thing in him, just like happened to David.

He looked within and began to believe that somehow by his own ingenuity, his own intellect, his own ability, his own righteousness, even that this kingdom had been built. And finally, it says, while the word was still in his mouth in verse 31, there fell a voice from heaven saying, Oh, King Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken. The kingdom is departed from thee.

Verse 33 says the same hour the thing was fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar and he was driven from men and to eat grasses and his body was wet with the dew of heaven. Till his hairs were grown like eagle's feathers and his nails like bird's claws. And, folks, some of us have gone through this.

I don't know about you, but I've gone through this from time to time over the years. You come to church and you're worshiping God and you're so happy about who you are and what God is doing in your life, only to find yourself on your hands and knees on Wednesday in your living room where you're dead. Your hair is a mess and your nails look like bird's claws and you're crying out to God.

You say, God, what is wrong? Why can't I feel the way I feel on Sunday? How come? Why are you so after this? What is it? What is going on in my life? You know, you have to understand that this is the grace of God that does this. It's God's grace. Now, I'm going to get to the end of the story about Nebuchadnezzar.

You're going to see he didn't stay in that field. But the Lord took him there by grace. And when you and I begin to become proud, God will take us somewhere by grace because he loves us.

He'll take us on a journey. It's not a very pleasant journey. And sometimes it's a hard journey, but he will do it because he loves us.

He will do it for you because he loves you. He will use us, but he will not let us get bigger in our sight than we should be. Except the corn of wheat, Jesus said, falls into the ground and dies.

It abides alone. But if it die, it brings forth much fruit. Jesus said you cannot keep your life.

You cannot you cannot love your life. You cannot keep this image of yourself alive and still abide with me. You have to die with me.

Paul said it conclusively. He said those who are baptized into Christ are baptized into his death. As Christ died to himself and lived to the will of his father, you and I are called to die to ourselves as well.

We're called to lay down self-image, lay down who and what we think we are, lay down all things of reputation, lay down all the praise of man. Just lay it all down and not love our lives, but love the life of Christ within us. Love what God does.

Give glory to God. Speak about the things of Jesus Christ. Give honor and glory where it is due.

When men praise us, begin to realize it's not us. We are not the ones who have the ability to achieve anything. Folks, listen to me.

Without the Spirit of God, you could be a murderer here today. You'd be an adulterer. You'd be a reprobate.

You'd be on drugs. You'd be stuck in pornography. You'd be a liar.

You'd be out there criticizing, cursing and condemning. You'd be selfish and lost without the Spirit of God. There's not a single man or woman who would stand and be righteous without the glory of God upon your life.

I don't want to love my life. I don't want to love who this man used to be. I prefer this man to die and Christ to be alive.

I prefer to disappear and Christ to appear. I prefer to be nothing that Christ may be everything. I prefer to think of myself as the least of all men that Christ might be glorified.

I said I prefer it, but it's only possible by the Spirit of God. In Daniel chapter 10, Daniel was spending a season seeking God. I believe like you and I are.

In Daniel chapter 10 verse 2, it says, In those days I, Daniel, was mourning three full weeks. I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth, neither did I anoint myself at all till the three whole weeks were fulfilled. Now, Daniel is a seeker of God.

And this message is for people. Remember, I started by sharing. It's for people who have had a measure of success in your Christian walk.

And you've had that measure of success because you are a seeker of God. And in the fourth and twentieth day of the first month, as I was by the side of the great river, verse 5, Then I lifted up my eyes and looked, and behold, a certain man clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with fine gold of Uphaz. His body was like beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as a lamp of fire, his arms and his feet like in collared polished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude.

Now, this is Jesus. I have no doubt if you look in Revelation when he appeared to John, it's the exact same description of Christ. And I, Daniel, alone saw the vision.

For the men that were with me saw not the vision, but a great quaking fell upon them, so that they fled to hide themselves. Therefore, I was left alone and saw this great vision, and there remained no strength in me, for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength. Yet I heard the voice of his words.

And when I heard the voice of his words, then was I in a deep sleep on my face and my face toward the ground. Behold, a hand touched me and set me up on my knees and upon the palms of my hands. And he said to me, O Daniel, a man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak unto thee, and stand upright, for unto thee am I now sent.

And when he had spoken this word unto me, I stood trembling. Then said he unto me, Fear not, Daniel, for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words. Now the Lord said to Daniel, You invited me to examine and prove your heart, and I have come for your words.

This was a time of mourning. It was a time of fasting. It was a time of seeking God.

And Christ came in response to the cry of this man's heart. And I know the cry of Daniel's heart. I've experienced it in my own life.

And I don't think any man or woman of God who will ever amount to anything in Christ has escaped this cry. This cry of the righteous, really. It's not the cry necessarily of the unrighteous.

It's the cry of the righteous. It says, Jesus, I so want to honor you. I so want you and I to be one in heart, and one in voice, and one in purpose, and one in direction that I'm asking you to come and challenge

everything in my heart that is unlike you.

I'm asking you to come as you walked into the temple and overturn all the doves, all the money changing, all the goats and bulls and everything that has come into this temple that has accepted, but it's wrong in your sight. And I'm asking you to overturn it. And Daniel is not alone in this fast.

The Scripture tells us there are others with him. And I believe that everybody's there. And this is almost like a group that's together and saying, Oh, Jesus, we want you to come.

Of course, they're not saying Jesus. They don't know him. But they're crying out to Jehovah God.

And it's like a group today that are crying out to Christ, Come, appear to us, speak to us, give us vision, give us revelation of the future. And I think this has to be the cry of the church today. We have to know, folks.

We can't be among the confused multitudes in our generation. We have to know. There is a sure word that comes from God to every heart that is seeking him in sincerity and in truth.

And all of a sudden, in the midst of this seeking of God, Christ appears. And an interesting thing happens. Daniel, of course, falls to his knees.

He's on his hands and knees and then eventually ends up on his face. And he is absolutely convinced of his corruption. He says, My comeliness was turned into corruption.

In other words, everything that I thought in me was good is not. Everything, of course, that is apart from God. Now, folks, I've rarely ever spoken of this, but I had an experience like this in my early years as a Christian.

I can't explain it other than to say the Holy Spirit came into a room and I met with God. And I've never been more afraid in all of my life. I fell off my chair, I fell on the floor, and I thought I was going to die.

It was an incredible experience. I know exactly what Daniel is speaking about here. And he says, My comeliness was turned into corruption.

I was aware of everything in me that was unlike Christ. And you would think that those others who were seeking God with Daniel would be experiencing the same thing. But they didn't.

You see, when Christ appeared, this is what separates the true seeker from the pretending seeker. When Christ appeared, they fled to hide themselves. And that's exactly the way it is.

A lot of people will come to prayer meetings. They'll go to fasting times. And they will give an outward verbal display of seeking God.

But when he comes to begin to walk as it is in the midst of the candlesticks and begin to speak about things that are entrenched perhaps in the heart but are not right in the sight of God, instead of yielding and instead of agreeing with God like Isaiah did in Isaiah 6 and Daniel did in Daniel 10, they flee and hide themselves. And I see people just running and hiding behind buildings and hiding behind pillars as Daniel alone now is meeting with God. And, you know, there are many, many who make a pretense of seeking Christ.

But the evidence of seeking Christ is there is a change in the heart. And there's an agreement with God. Whatever God says is wrong is wrong.

What he says is right is right. Now, can you see now in this scenario the others sliding back into the room in about an hour after this is all over? Daniel has been on his hands and knees. He's seen his corruption.

He's known the touch of mercy. Christ has touched him and said, Daniel, stand up. I'm going to speak to you.

You're a man greatly beloved of my heart. And from the moment you set your heart to be chastened before me, I've come for your words. And now I'm going to give you this incredible panoramic view of the future.

You're going to understand kingdoms, nations, times, seasons. I'm going to give you this open heaven. You're going to see like no other man sees because you've not run from me when I came to you.

And you've been willing to agree with me. And you've been willing to let my hand come and touch you and strengthen you. But I see the others come in, those others that were in the same room.

They had the same opportunity that Daniel had, but they chose to flee and hide themselves. And they're coming back in about an hour. And here's what they're saying.

Tell us, Daniel, what is God saying? What's God saying about the future? Did God say anything about us? And that's where many people are today, even in the body of Jesus Christ. And I have to ask you the question, how about you this morning? Where are you? Are you hearing from God? When God plainly declares, he says, you walk with me, I'll speak to you. I'll be a voice behind you that says, go this way.

You'll not be caught unawares. We're not children of darkness that the coming day should take us as a thief. I will show you what's coming.

I will show you where the refuge is. I will show you the peril of humanity without Christ. I will give you a sure word.

I'll give you a sure step. I'll put something deep in your heart that will cause you to stand in the midst of the storm, in the midst of the fire. You'll be a voice that praises me.

You will have another worldly view. You'll have your affection set on things above and not on things of the earth. You'll have a sure word of prophecy in a day of spiritual confusion.

But here they are coming in and they're saying, what is God saying? And this is the generation we're living in today. People running all over the world. What is God saying? When God says plainly, I will speak to you, everyone who seeks me, I will speak to you.

I will open your ear. I will give you a sure word. Every Christian, every place, irrespective of how long you have known Christ.

You might be a month in the Lord. Jesus says, I will speak to you if you have an honest heart. If I can come to you and challenge you.

If I can walk with you. I will speak to you. And you will not be caught unaware.

You will know the days that are coming upon you. You see, the principle is simple. Everything comes second hand to those who hide from God.

Everything. To those who hide from God comes second hand. It doesn't come from the voice of God.

It comes from someone else who has been in the presence of God. And tragically, those who are hiding from God have no discernment. And so they're listening to voices all through the spectrum of the Christian world today.

Most of whom have not been in the presence of God. Because they themselves are hiding. Not willing to let God call evil evil in their hearts.

Or they're holding to some wrong self image. They have built this image of themselves, even as a Christian. That's why all this theology on television is so dangerous, folks.

So dangerous. The theology that builds the human person. It builds the image of man, not the image of Christ.

It is dangerous. Because it takes you out of the realm of hearing and understanding who God is and what He's saying and what He is doing. It's like the man who's handed a pair of binoculars.

And he chooses to close both his eyes, lest he should see something in the distance that disturbs his sense of inner peace. And many people are like that today. They're given the promises of God, the Holy Spirit and the Word of God.

But close their eyes to the truth, lest their image of themselves should be disturbed. You say to me, then, if I'm in Christ, why must I be made aware of my own corruption? Isn't it all under the blood? Why? Why do I have to be aware of my own corruption? I'm in Christ. My sins are gone.

You see, folks, first of all, this is not about our salvation. Salvation is secured by faith in Christ. This is about the abundant life that Jesus promises to those that are His.

This is about the testimony that God wants to establish in the life of a Christian. I want to answer the question, why must I be aware of my own corruption? Why can't I just put it away? You see, the answer is simple. It's because Jesus Christ offers the believer an exchange life.

He offers his life for ours. The problem is, if we do not see that within ourselves, that which falls short of the glory of God, we will be content with it. And we will fail to demand the exchange that is rightfully ours.

Now, if anyone here today went online tomorrow or in the mail and you ordered something, maybe you ordered a pad, and it didn't write. You ordered a sweater, and it didn't fit. You ordered a suit, and one leg of the pants was six inches shorter than the other.

You ordered something, and it was defective. I have no doubt that no matter what anybody said about it, you would be back at the counter. You'd be online.

You'd be down at the store. If it was Macy's or wherever you bought it, you'd be at the counter and say, I want an exchange. This thing is defective.

This thing is not what it's supposed to be. This thing has fallen short of what it was advertised to be. And if Macy's refused to give you an exchange, I have no doubt that half of this room, you'd be taking them to a small claims court.

I have no doubt. You'd be adamant. This would be a cause in your heart.

You'd tell everybody in the church about it, how you got shortchanged at Macy's. You bought a suit, and the pants, one leg was shorter than another. How dare they try to force this secondhand insufficient garment upon me.

But you see, you would be adamant about it because you would be aware that it was corrupt. It was not what it was supposed to be. And this is why you and I need this examination of the Holy Spirit of our hearts.

We need the Holy Spirit to come and show us what is in us that is unlike Christ. Otherwise, we end up wearing a suit that is defective. We end up walking around in this thing clothed in the wrong garments.

You see, heaven has an exchange counter, folks. And as the Holy Spirit comes and begins to show us that our ability to love is deficient, our charity falls short of the glory of God. Our humility is not humility at all.

It's inverted pride. All of these things, we come to heaven's exchange counter and say, I demand in the name of Jesus an exchange of this thing that has entrenched itself within me that is unlike Christ. And I am told, I have it here in writing in the contract, that this that is on me is not to be mine, but this is mine.

I want this new life in Christ. The Bible tells us we are to come boldly to the throne of grace. We are to find help in our time of need.

We are to come to the man who has bread and knock on the door until he opens it and gives us everything we're asking for. Heaven's exchange counter should be filled every day with people from Times Square Church coming in saying, My patience falls short of the glory of God. I want an exchange for the patience that God gives.

My love falls short of the glory of God. My humility falls short of the glory of God. My loyalty falls short of the glory of God.

Everything I am falls short of the glory of God. I want an exchange. I want the life of Christ that is mine.

I want the promises of God that are mine. I want the glory of God that is mine. I want this abundant life that God has promised.

I want the testimony that only God can give. I want Him to be glorified. I don't want some little Nebuchadnezzar band playing every time I walk into a room.

I want to walk in the humility of God. In Matthew 16, Jesus called Peter blessed because he had a revelation. Peter said, You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.

Jesus looks at him and says, You are blessed, my father, because my father in heaven has revealed this to you. And the word blessed, we've shared this before, is makarios. And it means indwelt by Christ and fully satisfied.

Now, this is a future reference to Peter in a sense. Because Peter had, for all of his roughness and for all of his failings, he had this inward knowledge of his need of God and his own corruption. Right from the beginning, when Jesus finishes preaching a sermon in his boat, he falls on his knees and says, Depart from me, I'm a sinful man.

He had this inward understanding that he needed a new nature. But before what he saw in Christ would be realized, he had to see something. Peter had to see that he had a stubborn, self-righteous will that had to be yielded to God.

Matthew 26, 35, he said, Everyone else may deny you, but I will not. I'm prepared to die for you. Jesus had just told him, No, you're going to deny me.

Before dawn, you're going to deny me. But he had a stubborn will that had to be yielded. He had a quick fix impulsiveness that needed to be exchanged for a deep, heartfelt trust in God.

Matthew 26, 51 says he drew a sword and cut off the high priest's ear. Peter was just a quick fix. I know the solution to this whole thing.

I'll just cut this man's head off and then it will be over. How confused he must have been when Jesus told him, Put your sword up. Shall I not fulfill the will of my father? Peter had to become aware that he was inwardly corrupt without Christ.

I think that's the problem in much of the Christian church today. Many people really don't believe they are inwardly corrupt without Christ. Don't see that even the good things that we have and are all fall short of the glory of God.

Matthew 26, 75 says he went out and wept bitterly. And there is a bitter weeping that has to come to those who will be inwardly dwelt by Christ and fully satisfied. There is a season.

There's a night of sorrow. And throughout our lives there are times where this weeping may return. Not necessarily as prolonged and not necessarily with as much despair.

And we don't weep just simply because of the corruption that may have found a root in us. But we weep alternately because we have robbed Christ of a measure of his glory. Peter had to see that righteousness and humility had to be constant companions for the rest of his life.

Paul says in Galatians 2, 11, I withstood him to the face because he was to be blamed. Peter in his own fear had caused a reproach to the testimony of Christ among some Christians. And Paul the apostle withstood him.

But you see Peter by this point I'm convinced was indwelt by Christ. And he was satisfied. And he was not afraid to have his self-image challenged.

Could you imagine Peter of all people could say, who are you? New on the scene. Don't even know who you are. You come out of somewhere.

Say you fell off your donkey and had an encounter with God. Well, great for you. But I walked with him.

I sat with him. I heard him teach. Have you ever seen him face to face? And Paul, of course, couldn't necessarily say that in the same measure that Peter did.

But I believe Peter had this inward humility now where he could be withstood by the word of God. And he could be challenged because he hadn't built an image of Peter, the gatekeeper of heaven and such like. But there was an inward humility in him now and a righteousness which was not his own.

It was the righteousness that's given freely through Jesus Christ. We look at the end of these dealings that have come on in people's lives. And in Daniel four, if you're still in Daniel, go to Daniel four with me.

We see Nebuchadnezzar is restored. He has this dealing of God come into his life. And in Daniel four thirty six, he says at the same time, my reason returned to me.

And for the glory of my kingdom, my honor and my brightness returned to me. And my counselors and my Lord sought to me. And I was established in my kingdom and excellent majesty was added to me.

Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the king of heaven. All whose works are truth and his ways judgment and those that walk in pride he is able to abase. You see how gracious God is.

He gives this heathen king really a great taste of his own medicine and then brings him out. And where Nebuchadnezzar at one time would be a man who was seeking for a word always. He was always looking for a word from somebody else.

He was always seeking out his counselors and his astrologers and magicians and such like. And now at the end, he says the counselors and lords were seeking to me. He said God gave me.

I was established in my kingdom and excellent majesty was added to me. In other words, God made me and gave me increase. He fully restored me, gave me wisdom, excellent majesty and the knowledge of God.

And of course, a heart of truth that knew who God was and was able to give him the honor and the glory, perhaps for the first time in his entire life. I think of David where we started in the beginning of this message of having looked away as it is from God for a moment and looked in the mirror for strength in himself and in the kingdom of Israel. Seeing the justice of God come because of this thing, 70,000 people die.

He sees the angel with his sword drawn in his hand over Jerusalem and begins to realize that God has the power to raise up and God has the power to cast down. It is all God from beginning to end. And at the end of offering a sacrifice on the hill of Moriah, on the threshing floor of Ornan in the Jebusite, David gets a revelation in the next chapter.

First Chronicles, twenty to one. He says this is the house of the Lord God. David finally begins to understand as he comes through this struggle.

He comes through with the revelation of the pattern by the Spirit of the house of God. How God lives, how God works, how God operates, how he establishes his kingdom, how things run in divine order. His mind is opened by the Spirit of God and he sees this divine vision which he is able to prepare for and impart to his son Solomon.

And by the Spirit gives him the pattern of the house of God. Folks, I'm telling you, if you will agree with God on issues of your heart, you'll find the corruption doesn't stay corruption. It turns into revelation.

The mind begins to open. Excellent majesty comes. Wisdom is given of God.

The pattern of divine order begins to be revealed to the mind and the heart. The light comes into order. The mind comes into order.

The will comes into order. Your steps come into order. Everything you do begins to be both initiated and backed by the Spirit of Almighty God.

Your words don't fall to the ground anymore. There's power and authority in your speech, starting in your home and in your marriage and with your family and with your children, among your friends and in the workplace. The glory of God begins to come upon you as it did upon Nebuchadnezzar.

And people start coming and asking for a reason for the hope that is within you. Especially in this last hour of time. There have to be a people who agree with God.

If he calls it corruption, call it corruption. And if we walk in agreement with God, he says, I will take this corruption. I will cleanse you and give you revelation, knowledge of the ways of God.

We don't have time, but if we had time to go into Peter. You see Peter now in the books of 1 and 2 Peter with this panoramic vision as it is of heaven. Things being dissolved.

The people of God kept by the promises of God to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled reserved in heaven for you. Peter is taking from his bumbling, stumbling type of Christianity into a place of revelation where he can encourage those that are coming behind him. That God will not fail you.

His promises are yea and amen. He becomes an encourager of the brethren because he is walking in agreement with God. And he has this revelation of truth.

That encourages us even today gathered here in New York City in the year 2005. The question we have to ask ourselves today is, are we afraid to let God speak to us? Are we afraid to let him look into areas of our lives that fall short of his glory? Are we afraid that something of our self image is going to come crumbling to the ground? Well, folks, it will anyway. Jesus said, whoever falls on this stone, which is himself, will be broken.

But whoever it falls on will be ground to powder. And the word broken in the Hebrew text means conformed to the image of the cornerstone. Whoever falls on this stone, whoever is built on this foundation of Christ, will be by the spirit of God conformed to this image of Christ, will be broken.

If you have an image to maintain, something is wrong. If you are afraid to let God speak to your heart, something is wrong. If nobody can talk to you about certain areas of your life, something is wrong.

If you have this little golden statue that just keeps erecting itself every time somebody comes and tries to speak to you and the little band starts playing, something is wrong. Jesus doesn't do these things to his church, to you or I, because he's angry with us. He does it because he wants his life to be ours.

But he cannot walk with us unless we are in agreement with him. It's as simple as that. I'm going through a measure of what I'm preaching to you today simply because I want to be a man of God.

You cannot escape this classroom. There's no getting around it. There's no short-circuiting it.

There's no get the band to play so it can drown out the voice of God. It doesn't work. Are you hiding from God? Is your wife, your husband, your children, have they been trying to speak to you and you won't

listen? Have well-meaning, honest Christians been trying to speak into your life and you can't hear them? Have you something that you have allowed to be built that isn't God? Are you resisting God? Are you finding yourself happy on Sunday but on the carpet Wednesday seemingly unable to find out what it is that God is trying to speak? The only thing I can say to you today from my heart is if this is the case, it's time to hit the exchange counter.

It's time. It's time to say, Lord, search me. It's time for every backslider to stop playing with sin.

It's time for those who know what to do to begin to do it. It's time to ask God for genuine humility because God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble. It's time to agree with him because the hour is too late to be playing games now.

People may have been able to escape it 20 years ago but not now. This is a very perilous time, folks. And only that which cannot be shaken is going to remain.

And any false image of yourself that you have built is going to come crashing down. Time and circumstance will see to it. And the hand of God will not allow it to share the glory of Christ.

I'm going to ask you to join me. I'm at the exchange counter daily now. I am.

Daily. Daily. I'm at the throne of God and maybe that's just too simplistic but I'm there in my prayer time and say this is deficient.

This thing in me is deficient. This ability I thought I had is short. I'm here to exchange it.

I'm here to exchange it for that which is Christ. And God will not fail you if you will do that. He will not fail you.

You will change and your corruption will be turned to revelation. It's what we need. It's what this generation needs.

We're going to stand in a moment and I want to give a simple altar call today. If you need to hit the exchange counter, that's what this altar is today. There's something in you that the Holy Spirit is after, is speaking to.

I'm going to ask you to make your way to this altar and we're going to pray together. And let's believe God that he will be true to his word and give us what we ask of him. Let's stand.

Education annex, please. You can go between the screens. Could I ask, please, as we do this, if you could bring the babies in, too, as well.

We'll be dedicating momentarily. If you could make your way to the altar, if the Holy Spirit is drawing you, just come in. Come in close.

If you've been fighting with God, hiding from God, resisting God, you come here because you love him. You come here because he loves you. You come here because he will answer you.

He will give you what you ask for. You should seek. You'll find knock.

It shall be open. Ask. It will be given to you.

You find your argumentative, quick to anger, defensive. Nobody can speak to you. Time to let all these things that self-image fall to the ground.

Time to let God be God. Time to agree with him. Hallelujah.

Let's pray together. Lord Jesus, thank you for loving me, for loving me enough to see everything. It is in my heart.

And still you walk with me. And still you use my life for your glory. I ask you to give me the grace to agree with you.

When you speak to me about areas of my heart and areas of my life that need to be put away and exchanged for your life. I want to be a Christian. Whose life brings glory.

And brings honor. And brings revelation. Of who you are.

To my family. To my home. To my neighborhood.

And my nation. And my world. God Almighty.

Cleanse me. Change me. And give me the courage.

To let my self-image. Fall to the ground. And be overpowered.

By the hand of God. For the goodness of God. And for the glory of God.

I yield my life. As a vessel to you. Do with me.

Whatever you want. And take me. Where you want me to go.

And make me. Into the image. Of my Lord and Savior.

Jesus Christ. Let my life. Be a testimony.

Of Jesus. From now. Till the day I die.

Father I ask this. In Jesus mighty name. Amen.

Now just thank him for his goodness.

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