

When Sin and Religion Become Friends

by Carter Conlon

The sermon warns against the danger of sin and religion becoming friends, leading to corruption and darkness, and encourages listeners to seek God's truth and surrender their hearts to Him.

Duration: 48:50

Scripture: Matthew 6:22-23, Romans 1:18, Romans 1:25

Topics: "Compromise"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of living a transformed life in Christ. He highlights that religion, when devoid of true faith and relationship with God, is empty and dead. The preacher encourages believers to renounce dishonesty and sin, and instead embrace the mercy and hope found in Christ. He also warns against the danger of allowing sin and religion to coexist, urging listeners to wholeheartedly follow God's commands and not compromise their faith. The sermon concludes with a prayer for God's power and grace to enable believers to live obediently and reject the friendship of sin and religion.

Transcript

You have to understand today that the position I'm coming from in speaking this message is that it's in God's heart to restore you. It's in God's heart to bless you. It's in God's heart to allow you and I to have to receive the fullness of the life that he's promised us through Jesus Christ.

And if you can understand that, it makes it easier to hear this. It makes it easier to get to the conclusion and understanding where God wants to take you. Jesus himself said, you shall know the truth, the truth shall make you free.

While the know is not head knowledge, it's an inner embracing. It's an intimate word in the original text. It means that you shall inwardly embrace the truth, love the truth, desire the truth, want the truth, and then you shall be brought to the freedom that was purchased for you and for me on Calvary.

I come to you today as a pastor who's very well aware of my own frailty. One of the conditions of the high priesthood in the Old Testament is that those who led the people spiritually had to be aware that they too were frail. They too had struggles.

They too needed the same grace that they were about to speak about to others. I need the same grace that you need to make it through to the end. I have no strength of my own.

The strength I have has been given to me of God, and it's only been given because in my heart there's been a desire to walk in the truth. You would ask, has there ever been a time in your life when you've wanted to walk away from the truth? Oh, you better believe it. From the pathway that God's led before you? Yes, absolutely.

The very same struggles that you go through, I go through. We're all in this together. We're all in the same storm.

We all live with the same promise that we're going to make it to the other side. Thanks be to God. Please open your heart today.

Matthew chapter six, I want to talk to you about when sin and religion become friends. When sin and religion become friends. Father, I thank you for the anointing of your Holy Spirit.

Thank you for your mercy. Thank you for your grace. Thank you for your goodness.

Were it not for these things, none of us would have strength. There would be no hope. We would corrupt everything around us.

Our reasoning would turn dark. Our lives would be captivated by sin. But because of your mercy, we have hope.

We have strength. We have a future. Father, we just thank you.

I thank you for that anointing that overpowers my frailty. God, I plead for your people today. I plead for this church.

I plead for everyone who will hear this message in the future. I ask you, Lord Jesus Christ, give me the power to speak this in such a way that people will want to hear it. And I thank you for it in your precious name.

Amen. When sin and religion become friends, Matthew chapter six, verse 22 and 23. These are the words of Jesus.

The light of the body is the eye. If therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness.

If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness. Now, what does Jesus mean if the light that is in thee be darkness? Now, we look at the context of what he's speaking about in the scriptures. He's talking about using money as an illustration.

He's talking about the principle of serving two masters. And basically, he says, you cannot serve two masters. You'll either hate the one and love the other or else hold to the one and despise the other.

You can't serve two masters. I can't, you can't. Now, illustration is money, but it goes deeper than that.

It's that inner struggle that all of us have to face from time to time when we come to at least a minimal understanding of the ways of God, but yet in our own heart, we think we might know a better way. We

might be able to secure a more sound future. If we simply follow the path of our own reasoning, we might be happier.

If we don't take the pathway that God has set before us and take another pathway that seems to be easier, it seems to be more attractive, more admirable as it is to our own way of thinking. Now, it's possible to have a clear vision before us of what is of real value. And yet choosing to set our affections on something which could, which we have been made aware could be harmful.

It's possible to sit under the word of God to actually know what God is speaking. A clear view as it is, but inside wondering how close can I get to the fence before I'm outside? How close can I walk to the line before I'm rejected? Do I have to really, do I have to really walk the way that God says? Do I have to really do it the way that God says that I need to do it? How much do I really need to obey God? In the book of Ezekiel chapter 28, you don't need to turn there. There's, there's a story.

It's a prophecy to a king of a place called Tyrus. And it's those who study this say it's a reference to the fall of Satan himself and his subsequent corrupting of the human race. Now, whether or not the scripture refers specifically to this king, you can honestly say that it is in a sense of measure of that sin nature that was sown into the human race in the garden of Eden.

Satan himself came down to the earth and corrupted humankind. He corrupted Adam. He corrupted Eve.

He corrupted you. He corrupted me. We were born with a nature that is corrupt.

It is against God. It is contrary to the things of God. And let me show you exactly how it happens.

Speaking about this king, prophet Ezekiel says, or the Lord says through Ezekiel, you've been in Eden, the garden of God, and every precious stone was your covering. You had an anointing and you had been put in an appointed place. You walked in the presence of God.

The actual scripture text is that was upon the holy mountain of God. And you've walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire. You knew the character of God.

You came to an understanding of who God is. You walked in holy places. You sat in a place of an unhindered view as it is of who God really is.

He says, you were perfect in your ways from the day that you were created until iniquity was found in you. In other words, the very ability which I gave you corrupted you. We have reasoning.

We have the power to reason because God gave it to us. But yet that reasoning can corrupt us if it's not surrendered to the revealed Christ. Now consider for a moment that Satan had an unrestricted view of perfect light.

It was in the presence of God. Now you and I are in the presence of God. For example, we are in a place where we are worshipping.

We do have minds given to us to understand the text of scripture. We do have the Holy Spirit within us. If you're a child of God and through the Holy Spirit, you and I have the ability to be taught of the Lord, the ability to know what is right and the ability to know what is wrong is given to us by God.

So in another measure, in a smaller measure, perhaps we have an unrestricted view of God. That means that if you want truth, you can have it. If you want freedom, it can be yours.

If you want life, it's promised. If you want assurance, it can be in your heart. If you want a future, there is a future in Christ for you.

If you want strength, strength is yours. But even with the pureness of that light before him, he chose to follow his own reasoning. See, that was the downfall of Satan.

He chose another pathway. He believed that he knew a better way, that in fact, he could be God to himself. He could be his own God.

I can know what is right and I can know what is wrong. Why do I have to dwell in this narrow place? Now he was in an exalted place. The scripture seems to bear witness that there was a specific beauty about him.

There were giftings given him. There was a brightness about him. Perhaps one of the finer created beings in heaven in that particular moment, but his brightness corrupted him.

And he began to chafe at the narrowness. Here I am a little bit lower than God. Here I am assigned to a specific place.

But I believe that, you see, I'm created for something more than this. I believe that I have a destiny to occupy something bigger than what God's given me to do. Yes, I'm the anointed cherub.

And perhaps some suggest he was leading in some form of worship in heaven, whether or not that's the case. In his heart, the very giftings that God gave him corrupted him. And folks, you see this repeat itself in the human race over and over and over again.

People with brilliant minds, but absolutely corrupted by that mind, using the thought process to go farther and farther and farther away from the kingdom of God. He believed that he could be the instructor instead of the instructed, the discernor instead of the disciple, that he could become the creator of his own reality instead of being one who occupies a perfect reality that was actually made available to him to enjoy. He could create his own reality.

He could create his own right and his own wrong. And that is the very key. That's what Satan fell with.

That's what he brought down into the Garden of Eden. The same logic, the same reasoning. He came down to Adam and Eve and said to them, listen, God created you and he put you in this garden and you're tending these plants and you're naming a few animals.

But don't you think that you're created for something more than this? He brought his own logic and so did in the human race. Don't you know that if you just do it my way, that you can become as God's and you can know good and evil. You don't have to do it God's way.

I know God says that certain things are good and certain things are evil, but he's narrow. You don't have to live in this narrow way. You can be as God and you can make your own declaration.

This is good in spite of what God says about it. Folks, you wouldn't believe what we have to counsel in this church from time to time. People have sat in this congregation with all kinds of practices that are very

clearly prohibited in scripture.

But over time, sin and religion have made friends and they've come to the place of calling evil good. And it's amazing. Oh, God understands and this is wonderful.

Yeah, I know she's married and I know we've lived together for the last 12 years, but this is good. You see, we study the scripture together and we pray together. And I know that what God said, you see, but this is good.

It's amazing when sin and religion combine. That's what Jesus meant when he said, if the light that is in you be darkness, if you've sat under truth, but embraced a lie, how deep is that darkness? In other words, how do you get out of that darkness? Better to be an overt sinner, better to be the most reprehensible person in New York city, because then you know it, because then you have a chance to be redeemed. Better to be that than be in the house of God and be reprehensible and having put on a covering of religion and embraced a wrong view of God and a wrong view of the ways of God.

In his own mind, he had become God. That's the great, that's the danger we face folks. That's the danger you face.

It's the danger I face. It is in us, in all of us, in our fallen nature to want to be as God, to want to have the power to say this is to not forgive a person, for example, who's wronged us and say, this is good that I've not forgiven. I know what God says, but you see, this is good.

It's, it's in our power in the workplace to put our hand in the till and say, this is good. You see, they don't pay me enough. And you know, last year I didn't get that vacation I deserve.

So this is, this is good. Yet the scripture says all thieves dwell outside of the holy city, not just for time, but forever that no thief inherits the kingdom of God. But yet we can get to the place where we can actually be in the house of God.

We can actually be putting on clothes, religious clothing and becoming our own gods. Romans chapter one says it this way in verses 18. Let me just read it to you.

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and the unrighteousness of men who hold the truth in unrighteousness. In other words, hold the truth with an unsundered heart, hold it in unrighteousness, read it, but won't do it. Even when it's plain, even when it's clear.

Now I know there are times that you and I might be confused or not be sure which way to go, but if we, if we truly pray, the Lord will show us. If we seek godly counsel, we will find our way through. There's darkened corridors that sometimes come before us, but yet some things are very clear in scripture.

Verse 25 says they worshiped and served the creature more than the creator. In other words, worship and serve that which has been created. That's what Satan did.

That's what Adam and Eve fell for. That's the inherent nature that you and I received when our initial parents sinned in the garden of Eden, that there's a tendency that we can worship our own reasoning, our own thinking more than the one who created us. In verse 28, it's all summed up by saying, and God gave them over to a reprobate mind, a corrupted thinking, a crooked mind.

There is a point folks, and you and I ought to always pray that we never get there, but I have met people who are like this, who are in the house of the Lord, but they have such a corrupted thinking. After years of being and not obeying the word of God, their thinking is so corrupted that it's almost as if it can't be straightened. You can't get them out of this thinking.

They've so worshipped the thoughts of their own heart. They've so become their own god. They've so denied the text of scripture that you simply can't get them out of that way of thinking.

I have known people like this over the years. There's no greater darkness than when that which is inwardly corrupt takes on the covering of religion. That's why Jesus went to the Pharisees when they approached him in the gospel of Matthew.

He said, you serpents, you generation of vipers, how will you escape the damnation of hell? Now he's not condemning them in one sense. He's saying that you have so covered corruption in religion. You've so boxed yourself in.

You bought yourself a ticket to hell. How will you escape? How will you get out? How will you change? How will you ever get to the place? You've embraced this corrupted reasoning of Satan. You've covered death and decay with fine clothing and sweet religious words, but inwardly you hate God.

Now keep in mind that Israel was potentially the most religious nation on the face of the earth at that time. And Jesus could stand them to the face in John 8, 44. And he said to the Pharisees, you are of your father, the devil, and the lusts of your father you will do.

He was a murderer right from the beginning. He basically said to them, you're going to kill me. I've come to you.

I've come with words from God. I've come to bring you into freedom. I've come to draw you into the heart of God, but you've so fallen for the deceptive strategy of Satan.

You've so covered death and decay with religious garments. You're so entranced now in the wrong way of thinking that you are going to have two alternatives. The one is that you're going to repent of your sin and the other is that you're going to kill the voice that has been sent to draw you to the presence of God.

Oh, Jerusalem, he said, you stone the prophets. You scourge those that are sent to you. How many times I've longed to draw you to my heart.

How many times I've reached out. How many times I've tried to make this crooked way straight, but you wouldn't come to me. There's no deeper darkness than when sin and religion become friends.

There's incredible power in this deceptive state. The scripture tells us that Satan succeeded in taking one third of the angels with him in his rebellion against God. Now think of that for a moment, almost inconceivable, created beings who also had an unrestricted view of the glory of God.

And yet Satan succeeds in taking a third with him into his rebellion against God. You look down on the earth in Numbers chapter 16, there was a man as Moses led the people of God through the wilderness. His name was Korah.

And it's almost inconceivable to me, how did this man, he succeeded in getting 250 men of renown, the scripture says, to stand in opposition to divine order and God's leadership through Moses. And here are

these men standing before the tabernacle. They have their censers in their hand, which is a type of holy devotion, a type of prayer, a type of submission and surrender to God.

And they are completely unaware that they're about to be burnt to a crisp by the presence of God. They have no idea how did they get to that state? These are men of renown who became men of renown under the leadership of God. They were just stomping slaves in Egypt, that's all they were, but God brought them out.

And in that bringing out, the giftings were given and leadership ability was imparted by the presence of God to them. And yet there's an inner corruption. And all it took is that strategy of Satan one more time to say, no, no, no, this is narrow.

You see, you were meant for much more than this. You're in a kind of a confined place, but just think of how, just think of the glory that could be given you. Think of, you're meant to lead, you're not meant to follow.

And here they are with their censers, 250 men of renown, almost inconceivable, unless you understand that there's incredible power in the deceptiveness of the human heart. There's power in your heart to deceive you. Do you understand? I'm not talking about some exterior prophet comes into your house and leads you astray.

There's power in your own heart. Each one of us has that inner capability to walk away from God and to develop a scriptural reasoning around it that is completely corrupted. Keep in mind that it's the most religious nation on earth that cried out for the death of the son of God.

Folks, I don't know if there's a more religious nation in the world than Israel at that time. And they had the scriptures, they had as realistically, they had the Pentateuch, they had the books of the prophets. They had this, if they wanted it, this unrestricted view.

Remember, Jesus said himself, search the scriptures because in them, you think you have eternal life, but they are they that testify about me. It's very clear. It's very plain where this was all leading to.

And I've not come to destroy what you believe, but to bring it to its conclusion, to its completion. And they had a choice. They'd formed a religion.

They had covered corruption as it is. Jesus looked at the leaders and said, you appear righteous, but you're full of death inside. You clean the side of the cup, but inwardly there's simply decay.

And folks, and so they had a choice. God came. God came.

God came. Not a message about God, not another theory about God, not just a good man, not just a prophet. God came.

God in a human body. God. And all the evidence was there that he was God.

He could raise the dead. He could walk on water. I mean, he could multiply a few loaves and a couple of fishes and feed thousands of people.

I mean, God came. And so the choice was given them. I either believe God, I either go with what he's saying, or I just embrace myself as God.

And I embrace my covering as sufficient. I embrace my religion as worthy to be worshiped. And so it leaves me no other choice.

I have to cry out away with this man, crucify him. Folks, there are times you sit in church perhaps, and the preacher's preaching. It might even be happening to some right now.

And you're just in your heart, you're saying, oh, I wish he'd just be quiet. I wish he'd get onto something positive. Away with this man, away with this voice, crucify him.

He's touching. He's touching something I've embraced. He's touching a covering I've manufactured.

He's touching a religion I've started to practice. He's touching a sense of righteousness that I have created for myself. And it angers my heart.

And I don't want to hear this. I come to Times Square Church and hear one more sermon like this, I'm going to some positive place in the city. Some place where I can just practice my religion and feel good.

And there's probably a few places where you could do that. In him was life, the scripture said, and the life was the light of men, and the light shined in the darkness. And the darkness comprehended it not.

Now, you have to understand, the light shined in a religious darkness, and the darkness didn't comprehend it. Isn't it strange that the lepers heard it, the prostitutes could respond to it? Even the dead could hear it. But religion has a certain depth about it that makes it almost impossible sometimes to hear the voice of God.

But he says in Matthew 6.22, but if your eye is single, your whole body shall be full of light. Now, go with me to 2 Corinthians, please, in the New Testament. If your eye is single, if you're singly focused, if you and I are standing before a holy God, and we're saying, Lord, whatever you say is truth is truth.

Whatever you ask me to do, Lord, and I clearly know it's you, I'll do it. Wherever you lead me, I'll follow. Whatever you say is right is right.

Whatever you say is wrong is wrong. God Almighty, I'm not going to create some religious thing in my own heart that allows me to move in a direction of death, thinking it's life. 2 Corinthians 3, verse 14.

Now, speaking about Israel, their minds were blinded. For until this day remains the same veil untaken away in the reading of the Old Testament, which veil is done away in Christ. The religion blinded their minds, folks.

It's that simple. They created a system that was operating outside of truth. Even to this day, verse 15, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart.

Nevertheless, when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away. Now, that's a principle for there's a day coming when Israel is going to turn to the Lord. Thanks be to God.

But it's a principle that applies to you and I, to everyone who's here today. When you and I turned to the Lord, the veil, that which hinders us, that which blocks the view, that which keeps us in weakness, that which keeps us apart from the life that God offers us in Jesus Christ is taken away. And then suddenly something happens.

He says in verse 17, now the Lord is that spirit. And where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. And the word liberty really in the original text means generosity.

But we all with open face beholding as in a glass, or that means a mirror, the glory of the Lord are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the spirit of the Lord. The veil is taken away when you and I stand before God. And we're just simply willing to be honest in the sight of the Lord Jesus Christ and say, Lord, not my will, but thine, not my ways, but yours, not my thinking, but what you say.

This veil of incomplete religion, the deceptive reasoning of the human heart is taken away and we're brought into life. We become aware of verse 17 of the incredible generosity of God, where the spirit of the Lord is, there's liberty. It means generosity.

This incredible generosity where God says, I'm willing to give you a new heart. I'm willing to give you a new mind. I'm willing to give you a new spirit.

I'm willing to put love inside of you. Joy, long suffering, peace, holiness, temperance. I'm willing to give you peace in the midst of the storm, strength in the midst of your weakness.

I'm willing to do what can't be done apart from the strength of God within you. We're changed as we behold him into the same image that we're looking at from glory to glory. We are changed into the image of the one who thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

We're changed into the image of the one who was given for us when we're not even looking for him. We're changed. Our hearts are changed.

The whole basis of our religion is not to move ahead on some kind of a social ladder that we've created in our heart. The whole basis of what we do is to honor God and to see fallen men brought to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. We're changed into the same image from glory to glory by the spirit of the Lord.

That means that means that which brings the name of Christ to reputation. We're changed. We're changed.

It's a miraculous life that we enter into. Religion is obnoxious. Religion is death.

Religion is taking a corpse and putting a covering on it and calling it the church. But Christ is life. Christ is joy.

Christ is peace. Chapter four, Paul says, therefore, seeing we have received this ministry, verse one, and have received mercy, we faint not. We don't draw back in other words, but have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully.

But by manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost in whom the God of this world has blinded the minds of them which believe not. Lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

Folks, knowing this, we don't pull back, but we renounce. If we are the church of Jesus Christ, if you are part of the bride of Christ, you and I renounce dishonesty. We renounce craftiness.

We renounce deception. We renounce ever handling the word of God deceitfully. We simply renounce it.

We don't pull away from it. We say, God, your ways are right. Your ways are true.

I'm not going to sit in your presence and try to justify wrong anymore. I'm not going to justify evil. If you call it evil, it's evil.

I'm not going to hold to my heart something that you call me to put away. Young people that sit here this morning, and I wonder how many were out dancing in some club last night. Don't pull back.

The Lord says, let go of a certain lifestyle. Let go of a certain way of doing things. Let go of relationships that you shouldn't be in and practices that you shouldn't be doing.

Let the truth bring Christ to reputation. Paul says, commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. Commending ourselves by the manifestation of the truth, by walking a holy life, by walking a life that is simply true.

We're commending Christ to every man's conscience by walking in truth. If Satan can get the church and any generation to walk in spiritual compromise, he takes away the conviction that is supposed to be in us. It's a natural conviction.

We don't even have to say anything. Just the fact that you walk honestly. The fact that you and I do what is right when everyone else is doing what is wrong.

When the whole world is living as its own God, we acknowledge there is a God and we submit and surrender to him and worship him. We open this book and we don't treat it lightly. We recognize that it's truth and say, Lord Jesus, come and bring your name to reputation through my life.

You are God and I'm not. Your ways are right and mine aren't. I'm leaving my own reasoning and I'm moving towards where you're calling me.

Jesus said, if your eye be single, your whole body will be full of light. Your whole body. In other words, every chain, every wall, every enemy, every power of hell begins to be broken.

Your whole body. Your whole body, he said, full of light. Your whole body given strength that can only come from God.

Your whole body glorifying God. Paul said it this way, in him we live, we move, we have our being. It's all in him.

Your whole body being a declaration of the keeping power of God. Your whole body saying one thing when the world is saying something else. Your whole body, everything you are, everything you say, everything you touch, everything you do is a declaration.

Every little old lady you help across the street just because the tenderness of God is in your heart. Your whole body. Your whole body becomes an expression of God.

Your whole body is full of light. Changed into the image of God, if we do it God's way. Satan is so deceived that he doesn't realize the perilousness of his condition or position.

Most likely still believes he can overthrow the kingdom of God and be God. It's sad to say multitudes and multitudes and multitudes have embraced his reasoning. You can walk a certain way and never suffer a consequence.

My whole body resurrected quick and brought to the life which God intended, just like Lazarus raised from the dead. Given life, strength, health, hope, determination, direction. My whole body full of light.

Unhindered by the frailty of the fallen nature that I've inherited. Unhindered. Like David in Psalm 18, he said, through God, he said, I can leap over a wall.

Because of God, he said, I can run through a troop. No matter how many are amassed or what kind of force is against me. Because of God, David said in my life, I can run through all opposition that is set against me.

I can leap over any wall that the devil tries to build around me. I can believe that my life is going to be a testimony of his glory in my generation. I can believe it with all my heart.

Now the question arises, what is God telling you to stay away from? See, this is where we move towards truth, or we cover our own selves with a garment of religion. And what is he calling you towards? What are we to leave behind? And what are we to move forward to? Collectively, but most importantly, individually. This is a call to each one of us.

What is the Holy Spirit telling you right now to walk away from? See, this is where you're going to make a choice. You're going to either cover sin with religion, or you're going to throw off that garment and move towards a holy God and say, Lord, I'm going where you're calling me. I'm going to be what you have designed me to be.

I'm going to walk the pathway that you've set before me. Don't fall into the religious trap of becoming your own God and justifying wrong. And don't put off for long what God has called you.

If you're really wise, you won't put it off at all. But don't put off what God's called you to do. The more you put it off, the greater chance that you'll make peace with it.

And eventually call it good. Don't put it off. If you're under conviction, you're sitting reading your Bible, you're in a church like this one today, and the Holy Spirit has got his finger very clearly on an area of your life.

Don't put it off. You will end up making peace with it. You will end up covering it.

You will end up calling it holy because that is the fallen nature of the human heart. I want to challenge you and encourage you to do today what you know is right. And what God says is right.

Simply put, I'm out of here. I'm going with Jesus. It's that simple.

There've been times in my life where the Lord has asked me to lay some things down, things dear to my heart. But I saw clearly in Scripture what God was saying and made the decision to go with him. And to this day, I've not regretted it.

That is my altar call today. As simple as it sounds, I'm out of here. I'm going with Jesus.

Whatever that means to you, whatever it is that God's put his finger on, I'm not covering this with religion anymore. I'm not calling evil good. I'm not calling my own reasoning right.

I'm going to do what God says. I'm going to do it God's way. And I'm going to trust him for the miracle, the strength, the power, the glory.

And folks, if you do it God's way, there'll be a shout come into your heart. There'll be dance come into your feet. There'll be joy come into your heart.

There'll be strength come into your home if you simply make the choice to do it God's way. I'm going with God. What he clearly has spoken to me, the clear revelation of Scripture as it applies to my situation, I'm going to go with God.

I'm not going to follow my own reasoning. And folks, the absolute outworking of this is joy and strength. Seems like a hard thing sometimes to follow, but if you choose to follow when God is speaking, the end result is both strength and joy.

Father, I just thank you, Lord. I know I've delivered your heart this morning. I know it's in your heart to restore and to heal.

Now, Lord Jesus Christ, as we worship you, as we stand and behold you, give us the grace to move towards you. Help us, Lord, not to retreat, excuse or cover that which you're calling us to walk away from. Father, I thank you for this in Jesus' name.

We're going to stand in a moment, and if the Holy Spirit is drawing you, and God has spoken to you, and there's something you need to just simply walk away from to walk towards God, I'm going to invite you to meet me at the front of the sanctuary. In the annex, you can step between the screens if you will. After worshipping for a few moments, we're going to pray together.

Let's stand together. Please just make your way here, and we're going to pray. Now, listen very carefully.

I see some people at this altar just being overcome with grief, and that's not what this is about. Joshua was commissioned by the Lord to bring the people of God into their inheritance, but a lot of the people born in the wilderness had never had that deep working of the Holy Spirit and that putting away of what is dishonoring to God. This church is coming up to its 25th anniversary in the next couple of years, and the joy that is here, the open altars in this house have been because it was founded on a word that penetrated the heart and helped people put away things that needed to be put away.

And the end result was an open altar, and the joy of the Lord became our strength in this house. But we're another generation. It's another time, and we're going to need the strength of Christ to get through the days ahead of us.

We need our inheritance, and God wants to give that inheritance to us. But in order for that inheritance to come our way, everything that is a reproach to God must be put away. There must be no friendship between sin and religion in this house and in your life.

No friendship, and that's really what this altar calls about. There's no friendship between sin and religion. I'm not taking anything wrong and calling it right anymore.

I'm going to walk in the way that God chose me to walk. That's the way I'm going to walk. The end result is strength, is joy.

The end result is victory in the battle. The end result is direction in the storm. The end result is provision and famine.

That's what God wants to do, and that's what God is going to do for all of us. He's going to take us through and give us His life, because that's all that will get us through the coming days. It has to be His life.

There's nothing, there's no religion will get anybody through what all of us are going to have to face. It has to be His life within us. So this is not a time to be overwhelmed with grief.

This is a time to say, God, thank you that my heart's still open. Thank you, Lord, that you can speak to me. Thank you, God.

Thank you, Jesus, that we can be challenged. We can be corrected. For me, personally, I got to tell you, preaching like this is hard.

I don't enjoy this, but we promised you as a congregation that from this pulpit would come the full counsel of God. There'd be messages on joy, but I would do you such a disservice to not bring to you the full counsel of God. And we've promised as pastors as much as lies within us to walk this path and to be as tender as we know how to be, because we all need the same grace.

I need it just as much as you need it. Pray this simple prayer with me. Lord Jesus, in my life, there will be no friendship between sin and religion.

Give me the grace to obey you, to do what you say, and trust you for the power. God Almighty, I thank you so much that in the coming days you will strengthen me. I will have the inheritance of the life of Jesus Christ that is rightfully mine because of Calvary.

God, thank you that the truth is all that I need for strength, for life, for provision, and for freedom. You've promised, Lord, to keep me and sustain me. Jesus, thank you for the strength today to do what I know is right, to walk away from what I should leave, and to move toward your truth, your power, your kingdom, and your spirit.

For thine is the kingdom. It's the power and the glory today and forever. Amen and amen.

Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah. The end result is joy. The end result is joy.

The end result is joy. It's joy that's unspeakable and full of glory. The end result is joy.

Thanks be to God. You have a reason to praise him. You have a reason to clap your hands.

You have a reason to leap in the air if that's what God asked you to do. You have a reason because you and I are going with God. Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah.

Let's give God praise. Give him praise in this house. Hallelujah, hallelujah.

I made up my mind to go God's way the rest of my life. I made up my mind to go God's way the rest of my life. Goodbye world.

Goodbye world. I'll stay no longer with you. Goodbye pleasures of sin.

I'll stay no longer with you. I made up my mind to go God's way the rest of my life. I made up my mind to go God's way the rest of my life.

Goodbye world. Goodbye world. I'll stay no longer with you.

Goodbye pleasures of sin. I'll stay no longer with you. I made up my mind to go God's way the rest of my life.

I made up my mind to go God's way the rest of my life. Born again. Born, born, born again.

King God, I'm born again. Born of the water, born of the water, spirit of the flood, did not unfold again. Born of the water, spirit of the flood, did not unfold again.

Born of the water, born of the water, spirit of the flood, did not unfold again. Born of the water, spirit of the flood, did not unfold again. I've got my mind, I've got my mind made up, and I won't turn back.

Cause I want to see my Jesus someday. I've got my mind made up, and I won't turn back. Cause I want to see my Jesus someday.

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