

Genuine or Fake

by Chuck Smith

Chuck Smith's sermon emphasizes the importance of genuine worship and commitment to God, warning against half-hearted faith and the dangers of spiritual complacency.

Duration: 34:17

Scripture: Psalm 111:1

Topics: "Genuine Faith", "Repentance"

Description

This sermon focuses on the importance of wholehearted commitment to God, drawing parallels between the half-hearted worship of Judah in the Old Testament and the lukewarm attitudes in modern times. It emphasizes the need for genuine repentance, self-examination, and a sincere relationship with God, rather than superficial religious practices. The message calls for a deep search of the heart, a desire for God's truth, and a commitment to serving Him with complete devotion.

Transcript

Let's turn in our Bibles now to Psalm 111. I'll read the first, the unnumbered verse. Pastor Brian will lead the congregation in the reading of the even-numbered verses, and shall we stand as we read.

Praise ye the Lord. I will praise the Lord with my whole heart, in the assembly of the upright and in the congregation. The works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein.

His work is honorable and glorious, and His righteousness endureth forever. He hath made His wonderful works to be remembered. The Lord is gracious and full of compassion.

He hath given meat unto them that fear Him, and He will ever be mindful of His covenant. He hath shown His people the power of His works, that He may give them the heritage of the heathen. The works of His hands are verity and judgment, and all His commandments are sure.

They stand fast forever and ever, and are done in truth and uprightness. He sent redemption unto His people, and He hath commended His covenant forever, holy and reverend is His name. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

A good understanding have all they that do His commandments. His praise endureth forever. Let's pray.

Father, we ask that, as David, we might, Lord, praise You with our whole heart. That our commitment to You will be a wholehearted commitment. That we might serve You with our whole heart.

Lord, we pray that we would not be half-hearted in our relationship with You. And if that be the case, then, Lord, we pray that You would deal with us and draw us unto a full and complete commitment of our ways unto You. Bless, we pray, Lord, our study of Your Word today.

May our hearts be open to receive Your truth, to be directed by Your Spirit, that we might be led, Lord, in Your path. In Jesus' name, amen. You may be seated.

Tonight, as we continue our journey through the Word of God, Pastor Skip will be leading us in our study of Jeremiah chapters 3 and 4. So we encourage you to read them over and then join with us this evening as we gather to worship the Lord and continue through the Word of God. This morning we'd like to draw your attention to the third chapter, verse 10, where the Lord is calling Jeremiah to go to the nation of Judah and to speak to them about their half-hearted kind of commitment to the Lord. It wasn't really a genuine, full-hearted turning back to God, but as the Lord sort of declares, they were worshiping Him faintly.

In verse 10, For all of this her treacherous sister Judah hath not turned unto me with her whole heart, but faintly, saith the Lord. This particular prophecy came to Jeremiah during the reign of Josiah, king over Judah. Now, Josiah was a good king.

His grandfather Manasseh was the worst king that Judah ever had as far as spiritual seeking God. During the reign of Manasseh, the nation sunk to its lowest moral and spiritual level. Manasseh reigned for 55 years.

It was a horrible reign as far as righteousness was concerned. The temple worship was totally abandoned. The temple had become sort of a dumping ground for trash.

And they were worshiping the false gods, images, and idols throughout Judah. The death of Manasseh brought the reign of his son Ammon, and Ammon was no better than his father. The Scripture said he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, as did his father Manasseh.

Ammon was assassinated after just two years of reigning over Judah. His son Josiah was a very young man at the time. He was only eight years old, but he was made the king over Judah.

He had good counsel and godly men that were helping him, advising him. And under the reign of Josiah, there began a series of spiritual reforms. The cleansing of the temple, the reinstating of the worship in the temple, the putting away of the false gods.

And in the 13th year of the reign of Josiah, he was now 21 years old, and he was able at this point to begin to take the reins of the nation and follow the advisors and counselors in further spiritual reforms. It was during this 13th year of the reign of Josiah that Jeremiah was called of God to be the prophet to the nation of Israel. Jeremiah was probably 20 years old at the time.

And so here's a nation where most of the older people were under the reign of Manasseh, the evil reign of Manasseh. The sin was still there in their hearts. And though Josiah was a popular king and though he instituted spiritual reforms, with many of the people, it was only a surface kind of change.

In their hearts, they were still following after the northern kingdom of Israel, who had turned away from God and as a result had been taken captive by the Assyrians and had been taken away from the land. And so basically the Lord is saying to Jeremiah, go and speak to Judah and tell them that they are a treacherous sister to Israel. That they saw the evil that was happening in Israel.

They saw the worship of the false gods, the paganism that was there. And they saw the result of it. They saw how that they were destroyed and how that they lost the land and they were taken away as captives unto foreign lands.

And yet they are actually worse than Israel in as much as they had a classic example before them of how a nation, when it forgets God, is going to fail and going to fall. And yet Judah followed in the same path. And though they have turned to me, it's not with their whole heart.

It's just sort of a feigned worship of me. The people had known very well the judgment of God that had come upon the northern kingdom because of their forsaking of the true and the living God. And they were following in those footsteps of the northern kingdom.

Josiah was attempting to turn the people back to the Lord. The temple was cleansed and worship reinstated. However, God's complaint was that it wasn't really from the heart of the people.

They were there in the temple because it was fashionable. They were there because it was the end thing to do because the king was doing it. They could mouth the words of worship and praise.

They could quote the scriptures, but it wasn't in their hearts. Their relationship with God was not a genuine relationship. It was political correctness at that time.

Our nation today, I feel, is facing grave danger because we've turned our backs upon God and we are worshiping and serving idols in our nation. Oh, I know that we don't have little statues for sale in the marketplace and put them in our entry halls, but yet in the hearts of the people, there is an idolatry. There is a worship of other gods.

There are other interests that actually supersede our interest for God, and I believe that our nation is, as Judah, facing grave dangers. We are facing, really, the destruction of the nation because we worship God not with our whole hearts, but it's just a duty that we perform. It's interesting at this time of elections that many of the candidates are pulling out that spiritual card, seeking to play it only as a political gimmick to gain the vote of the Christian community, for they realize that the Christian community could very well be the deciding factor in the coming election, and so they want to appear like they are very interested in God and the things of God, but it's really more than what they just say, but it's how they vote on issues.

In the debate, the middle debate the other night, when Kerry was questioned by a young lady on the subject of partial birth abortion, it was all as though he was almost in tears as he was attempting to sound so sincere as he told her of his deep faith in God that was instilled in him through his being a Catholic and being raised in the Catholic schools, and that his trust in God was a very meaningful thing in his life, but he declared, I believe in the constitutional rights of a woman over her own body. Oh, I thought, what a slick, double-minded, double-tongued guy he is, for he voted against the ban of partial abortion, and yet he tried to indicate that he was really for it in his heart because of his deep Catholic background. On the homosexual issues, again, he tried to skate around it, indicating that he did not believe in same-sex marriages, but he believed in the civil rights of everyone to do as they pleased.

So, on every homosexual issue, he voted in favor of the homosexual issues and against the ban, or against really the constitutional amendment that would say that marriage was between a man and a woman. But yet, you see, this is part of, of course, the whole politics, and he is basically saying that his faith means nothing to him. It has nothing to do with his voting record.

That he voted against the ban for partial birth abortion and has promoted every homosexual cause because he has a strong belief in the Constitution of the United States and in the civil rights, and they actually are superseding the biblical injunctions of the Word of God. That's just the kind of condition that existed during the days of Jeremiah. The people weren't saying one thing, but they were doing another.

In Isaiah 29, 13, we read, Wherefore the Lord said, These people, they draw near to me with their mouth, but with their lips they do honor me, but they have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men. Yes, you can say the right things. Yes, you can draw near him with your mouth, but God is looking at your heart, and the issue is, where is your heart? Here the people were in temple.

Here the people were worshiping, but God said, they're not there with a whole heart. It's all fake. It isn't a genuine worship of me.

So, as far as the people were concerned, their backs were still turned against God, even though they were attending temple worship once again, but it wasn't a true experience. Often, a person, because they can use spiritual jargon, seem to feel that they are all right with God, because I can throw in some, oh, bless God, and I can throw in, praise the Lord, and oh, praise the Lord, because I can use spiritual jargon. I feel like I'm really close to the Lord, because I know the jargon that Christians use, and some people are resting on that, though their hearts are far from God, yet with their lips, they can say the praise of the Lord and so forth.

In the Old Testament, we find that Saul was commanded by God to go down and to utterly wipe out the Amalekites, because that's an extremely wicked race of people, and God said, destroy them completely. Don't take any captives. Don't kill all of their animals.

Utterly destroy the Amalekites. And so Saul went down, and God delivered the Amalekites into his hands, but as he looked at the cattle and the sheep, some of them were good, healthy stock, and so he decided that he would bring those back. Those that were sick and weakly, he hacked to pieces.

He also brought back captives of the Amalekites, and when he came back victorious, the prophet Samuel went out to meet him, and Saul greeted the prophet Samuel. He said to him, blessed be thou of the Lord. I have performed the commandments of the Lord.

Lie. Not. He had not performed the commandments, but you see, he used spiritual language.

Blessed be thou of the Lord. Oh, sounds very spiritual, doesn't it? And yet he was covering over the fact that he had disobeyed the commandment of the Lord. We find Saul using the phrase, as the Lord liveth.

Now, in his day, that was a very spiritual phrase, and if you wanted to make a declaration, sort of an oath, you'd say, well, as the Lord lives, or as the Lord liveth, and he was using that often, and yet his heart was so far from God. So be careful about spiritual jargon that you are not deceiving yourself, because you can use spiritual phrases that you feel like, well, you know, I know that I'm not what I should be, and I know that I do this and that, but, you know, I can still say praise the Lord, and hallelujah, and all. God is looking

at your heart.

To him, your heart is far more important than your words. And I often think that God doesn't really listen to our words, because he is looking at our heart. We are told in the scriptures that our heart is deceitful.

It's desperately wicked. And it asks the question, who can know it? But then God said, I search the hearts. God is searching your heart today.

But as he searches your heart, what does God see? What do you think God's evaluation is of your relationship with him? As the people were in the temple in Jeremiah's day, God said of them, they're not worshipping me with their whole heart. Their worship is feigned. It's a half-hearted, or it's a fake kind of a worship.

Can you, as you look at your heart, honestly say that I am loving the Lord with my whole heart? Isn't that what Jesus said is the first and greatest commandment? Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy strength. Can that be said of you as God sees your heart? Are you loving God with your whole heart? Are you content with your commitment to him today? More importantly, is he content with your commitment today? Paul wrote that they that run in the marathon races, though there are so many that run, only one receives the prize. So run, he said, that you might obtain.

That is, run to win. Put everything you've got into winning the race. Do you know what one of my deepest concerns is that I have about the ministry? I have a deep concern that many of you are not going to be in the kingdom of heaven with me.

By virtue of the fact that you attend church here and you consider this your church home, and you hear me teach the word, you're sort of just depending on that to be your key into heaven, rather than a personal commitment of yourself completely to the Lord. I feel that many of you are lukewarm, and that condition deeply concerns me because Jesus said, because you are lukewarm, I will spew you out of my mouth. I don't believe that many of you can say honestly that you serve the Lord with all your heart and soul and strength.

Paul wrote to the Corinthians, Examine yourselves, whether you are in the faith. Prove your own selves. Again he wrote, Let every man examine himself, for if we will judge ourselves, we will not be judged of God.

Writing to Titus, Paul said, They profess that they know God, but in their works they deny Him, being abominable and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate. They're making the professions, but their actions, their works, are contrary to their professions. They profess to have a genuine relationship with God, but it's not a genuine relationship.

David prayed in Psalm 26 too, Examine me, O Lord, and prove me. Try my mind and my heart. Again in Psalm 139, David prayed, Search me, O God, and know my heart, I pray.

Try me and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. I think that these are important prayers and one that each of us should be praying. Lord, search my heart.

Lord, try me. Put me to the test. Let me know, Lord, what you know about me.

I know my heart is deceitful and desperately wicked above all things. Lord, help me to know what you know. Reveal, Lord, the truth to me.

Put me through the test, so that I can see, Lord, what you have known all the while. The Lord had commanded Jeremiah here in chapter 3, to go and proclaim these words toward the north. Now, the north was where Israel had its kingdom that had been destroyed.

The land is now occupied by other people. The Israelites are scattered throughout the world, but call in a kind of a way that just sort of is an illustration. Call towards the north and say, return, backsliding Israel, saith the Lord.

And I will not cause my anger to fall upon you, for I am merciful, saith the Lord. I will not be angry forever, only acknowledge your iniquity, that you have transgressed against the Lord your God and have scattered your ways to the strangers under every green tree. You have not obeyed my voice, saith the Lord.

But turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord, for I am married unto you, and I will take you, one of a city and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion, and I will give you pastors, according to my own heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding. God is calling. The nation has been carried away, but God is still merciful.

God still wants to forgive their sins. God still wants to have a relationship with them, a meaningful relationship, a loving relationship. And though they had turned their backs upon Him and because of that had been taken captive, still God cries for them to come and to repent, confess their sin and receive His mercy and His forgiveness.

And God is promising, I will give you pastors after my heart. As you read the record of Israel, and it's going into captivity, the priest had become corrupted, and their ministers, their pastors, were no longer teaching them the truth of God. And as a result, the nation went down spiritually, morally, and ultimately, physically.

But God is saying, I will give you pastors after my heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding. Years ago, when I felt God was calling me to the ministry, I was attracted to this particular passage. And I prayed and I said, God, if I go into the ministry, I want to be a pastor after your heart, a pastor that will teach the people knowledge and help them to gain an understanding of you.

And thus, I committed myself to teaching the word of God. I can understand why Jeremiah is known as the weeping prophet, because he saw the conditions of the nation, and he knew that those conditions would provoke the judgment of God. And he knew that the nation was going to fall, that it would be taken as was Israel, captive by their enemies, only Babylon would be the instrument that God would use against Judah.

And he saw the direction the people were going. He saw their lifestyles, and he realized that they were on the road and on the path to destruction. And he was there crying out to them to turn from that path, to turn back to God, to cease their backsliding, and to come into a wholehearted commitment of their lives unto the Lord.

But the people seemed to be blind to their condition. They were mollifying their conscience by the fact that we are going to temple, we read the scriptures, we sing the songs of worship, and yet their lives were not totally committed to the things of the Lord. And as a result, they did go into captivity.

Today so many people are in church for entertainment. They are there because of excellent dramas, the outstanding choirs and orchestras, and they listen to the little sermonettes for the Christianettes, and how to be a better you, and how to get along with your teenager, and how to manage your finances. There are very few pastors who are teaching the Bible that the people might obtain the knowledge of God and the understanding of God.

If you want entertainment, if your itching ears are desiring to be scratched, I do not recommend that you come here. For as long as the Lord gives me strength, I'm going to teach the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. So help me God.

You see, I don't want anybody at the judgment seat of God to point to me and say, Pastor, why didn't you warn me? As Paul said to the church of Ephesus, I want you to bear record of this. I am free from the blood of all men, for I have declared to you the whole counsel of God. And I want to be able to say that.

I am free from the blood of all men, because I have declared to you the whole counsel. That's why we go through the whole Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, that you might know God's whole truth. So here we are.

This is God's message to us today. Now what are we going to do with it? Are we going to go and say, Wow, he was really on it today, wasn't he? Or are we going to say, Oh God, search my heart. Put me through the test.

Help me to know the truth. Help me to walk in the truth. Help me, Lord, to serve you with my whole heart.

Father, we do pray even now that your Holy Spirit will search our hearts. And Lord, help us to see what you see, to know what you know. And if, Lord, there are areas where we're holding back, if there are areas of our hearts where idols have been erected, and we are worshiping other things, oh God, this day, forgive.

This day, Lord, may we experience your mercy and your grace. This day, Lord, may we renew our commitment to you and our determination, Lord, to love you with all of our hearts and our mind and our strength. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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