

Lying Vanities

by Chuck Smith

The sermon emphasizes the importance of putting your trust in God and forsaking your sin, rather than relying on external things like rituals and traditions to save you.

Duration: 36:41

Scripture: Matthew 15:1

Topics: "True Repentance", "Heart Transformation"

Description

This sermon delves into the importance of genuine repentance and worship, emphasizing the dangers of religious hypocrisy and the need for true heart transformation. It highlights the deceptive nature of trusting in rituals or traditions for salvation, urging listeners to turn away from sin and fully commit to serving God with sincerity and truth.

Transcript

Now, let's turn in our Bibles to Matthew chapter 15. Our scripture reading this morning will be the first 14 verses of Matthew 15. I'll read the first, the outnumbered verses.

Pastor Brian will lead the congregation in the reading of the even-numbered verses through verse 14. Let's stand as we read the word. Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees which were of Jerusalem, saying, Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they wash not their hands when they eat bread.

But he answered and said unto them, Why do you also transgress the commandment of God by your traditions? For God commanded, saying, Honor thy father and mother, and he that curseth father or mother, let him die the death. But you say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me. And honor not his father or his mother, he shall be free.

Thus have he made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition. You hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying, This people draw nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoreth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandment of men.

And he called the multitude and said unto them, Hear and understand. Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man, but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man. Then came his disciples and

said unto him, Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended after they heard this saying? But he answered and said, Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up.

Let them alone. They be blind, leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into a ditch.

Let's pray. Help us, Father, that we would not be blinded by the traditions of man. Help us, Lord, that we would not be guilty of worshiping you with our lips, though our heart is far from you.

We ask, Lord, that you would deal with the condition of our hearts, that central part of our lives may be geared around you, Lord. May you indeed be first and foremost and above all else in our lives. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

You may be seated. Tonight, Pastor Skip is going to be leading us in the study of Jeremiah 7 and 8 as we continue our journey through the Bible. And so we would encourage you to come on out this evening.

Join with us at 7 o'clock. Then also, you fellows who have been at the Anaheim Convention for our men's conferences, you know what an interesting and exciting speaker Pancho Juarez is. I'm sure as you were sitting there, you were thinking, Oh, I wish my wife could hear this guy.

He is something. Grew up in East L.A., you know, part of that whole gang mentality and all. But oh, how powerful he is in the Word of God.

Maybe you've heard him on K-Wave. I encouraged him to go on the radio because he has such a great down-to-earth practical ministry. And so I would encourage you.

You've probably never been out to church on Thursday night for a long time. You might come out this Thursday night and hear Pancho. He's just really one exciting fellow.

This morning, let's look at Jeremiah chapter 7, beginning with verse 1. This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying, Stand in the gate of the Lord's house and proclaim there this word and say, Hear the word of the Lord, all ye of Judah, that enter in at these gates to worship the Lord. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place. Trust not in lying words, saying, The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord.

This message to Jeremiah to go to the entrance to the temple where people were gathering to worship and cry out unto them to amend their ways. Don't trust in lying vanities, just saying, Oh, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord. In the 26th chapter of Jeremiah, we are told that the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah at the time that Jehoiakim had become king over Judah.

Josiah, who was the king at the beginning of Jeremiah's ministry of prophecy, was a godly king. Under his reign, the nation had a spiritual revival. At least it hit the surface.

People were going back to worship at the temple again. For many of them, it was just the in thing. It was the fad.

It was fashionable, and they were there in body, but not necessarily there in spirit. When Josiah first came to the throne, the temple was a total mess. It had decayed.

It had run down. It had not been used for years. There had been no worship services in the temple.

In fact, the temple became a convenient place for the people to dump their garbage, and thus it was filled with trash and just a smelly dump. But Josiah ordered that they hire carpenters and masons, and they go in and they repair the temple. They rebuild it, and that they institute worship services again in the temple.

As they were cleaning out the trash, a priest by the name of Hilkiah found a copy of the Law of Moses, which he delivered to Shaphan the scribe, who brought it to King Josiah and read to him the Law of Moses. In the Law of Moses, there God described the blessings that would come upon the nation if they would keep the commandments and serve the Lord. But also there within the law were the judgments of God declared would come upon the nation and the country if the people would turn from the law of God.

They had turned away from the law of God. When he read the commandments of God, Josiah realized just how far they had strayed from the law of God. And he knew that the judgment of God was being pronounced upon them.

And so Josiah sent messengers to Huldah the prophetess as to what was going to happen. And Huldah the prophetess responded that the judgment of God was going to come, that the nation would fall and become captives to the Babylonians, but not in the lifetime of Josiah because he turned to the Lord to serve the Lord. But Josiah the good king is now dead.

His son Jehoiakim is not made of the same cloth of his father. Jehoiakim is a wicked man and it doesn't take long for the people to turn their backs on God under wicked leadership. And under the wicked leadership of Jehoiakim the people were still coming to the temple, but their attitude now was maybe if we go to the temple to worship God we can stave off the judgment of God from the Babylonians.

Because now the Babylonian was a real threat to them. They were really fearful of Babylon and the armies of Babylon that had conquered actually the Egyptians upon whom they had been trusting for help if they needed to defend themselves. In fact Josiah was killed in a battle where he went down against the Egyptian pharaoh and it was now the Egyptians had been defeated and the people were worried and so their going to temple now was more or less sort of an insurance policy.

They had somehow a feeling that as long as we go to temple and worship God, God will protect us. And so their worship was purely perfunctory. They really weren't worshipping God from their hearts.

It was just sort of to stave off the judgment from the Babylonian invasion. And so going to temple under this guise, under this thought or attitude, sort of like a good luck charm. As long as I'm carrying this I'm going to be okay.

That was sort of the idea of the temple that just being there would provide them the security from their enemies. So while they were gathering with this kind of a background the Lord said to Jeremiah, go down to the entry into the temple. Cry out to the people that are going in.

Amend your ways. Turn from your wickedness. Don't trust in the lying vanity saying the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these.

Don't trust in the fact that you are going there to worship that somehow you're going to spare yourself from the judgment of God that is going to come because you as a nation basically have turned your back upon God. You're worshipping idols. You come sure on Sabbath to worship God, but during the rest of the week you are living for self.

You are living for pleasures. You are serving other gods and don't trust in the fact that you're here on the Sabbath day that God is going to protect you from the coming judgment. And so Jeremiah went down and began to cry to the people.

As they were going in to worship the Lord there at the temple there's always two views. There's the view from the human level. As they were going in they would be talking about, oh the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord.

And Jeremiah said don't trust in this lying concept. The spiritual side of it. Yes physically they were there ostensibly to worship God, but in their hearts it was a different thing.

If you were there and if you would hear the beautiful music, the trumpets, the blowing of the trumpets. If you would see the people as they were bowing going in to the temple you'd say, oh isn't that beautiful. People are going to worship the Lord.

There is a real national movement toward God. How wonderful. But God looking at the heart of the people, He sees that they're not really going there to worship Him.

They're going there for benefit or gain for themselves. The hope that God will not allow the Babylonians to destroy them. People who are in this place of semi-religious are probably some of the most difficult people to reach.

They're in a very dangerous place spiritually. They're in a place of spiritual deception. And throughout the Bible we are constantly being warned about spiritual deception.

Jeremiah is warning these people about their spiritual deception. Don't believe in these lying vanities saying the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord. People who are in spiritual deception often feel that they are all right because they are still following certain traditions.

I had an uncle who was about as wicked as a man who ever lived. And when I would witness to him about the Lord he'd say, oh Charles, I pray every night before I go to sleep. And I'm sure his prayer was still now I lay me down to sleep.

But he learned when he was a kid. But he was alcoholic. He was profane.

But he comforted himself. He was deceiving himself in the fact that oh, I pray before I go to sleep every night. Well, the prayers are meaningless when you are living a life that is so opposite of what God says we ought to live.

But you see it's deceptive. You say, oh, I know I'm not as I should be. I'm not living as I should and all.

But I still pray every night, you know. No, it's meaningless. The prayer is just a empty words.

It's not your heart. You're not really seeking God and to do the will and the purpose of God. And so often it's true about coming to church.

You think, well, I still go on Sunday, you know, and I sit there and I listen, you know, to the message. But your heart isn't necessarily here. Joel spoke to the people and he said, therefore sayeth the Lord, turn to me with all your heart and with fasting and with weeping and with mourning and rend your heart and not your garments and turn to the Lord your God.

For he is gracious, he's merciful, he's slow to anger, he's of great kindness and he is reluctant to bring judgment. Here the people could go through this religious thing of showing great mourning and grief and tear their clothes and say, oh, it's so horrible. But God says, no, tear your heart, rend your heart, tear your heart, not your garments and really seek the Lord with your heart.

A person who is a sinner knows he's a sinner. It's easier to reach than the person who thinks that he is spiritual because he goes through spiritual rituals, but whose heart is filled with other things. As they sit here on Sunday morning, as they sing the hymns, it may look from outward appearances like, my, isn't that wonderful, they're sitting there worshipping God, but in the heart, perhaps you are planning your schedule for this coming week.

Perhaps you are planning your schedule you are planning your vacation itinerary. Perhaps you're thinking about the Sunday meal and your heart isn't really truly in tune in worshipping God. Many are here physically but not necessarily spiritually.

You're somewhere else. You're not, your life is not really centered in the Lord. Can you see the deception? Can you see these people who were going into the temple saying, oh, well, you know, as long as we go to temple, the Lord will probably keep us from the Babylonian invasion.

But their heart wasn't in it. They were trusting in a lie, in a deception. They were trusting that the rituals of the temple would keep their country from going down to defeat.

But God is saying, if you amend your ways and your deeds, then I will cause you to dwell in this place. I will protect you. But you can't do evil all week long and then hope to somehow atone for it by coming to temple on Sabbath.

Your security and deliverance will come when you are doing the right things. Down in verse 5, Jeremiah, for if you will thoroughly amend your ways and your doings, if you will thoroughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbor, if you oppress not the stranger and the fatherless and the widow and shed not innocent blood in this place, neither walk after other gods to your hurt, then I will cause you to dwell in this place in the land that I gave to your fathers forever and ever. You can have this forever, but it's conditioned upon your doing the things that please me.

Their safety and their preservation in the land will never be insured by their religious rituals at the temple, but by a true repentance and turning to God. Jeremiah is telling them, don't trust in these lying thoughts that somehow the temple is going to preserve you from the Babylonian invasion. In verse 9, Jeremiah begins to list some of the things that the people were guilty of doing during the week.

He said, there are many people today that are doing the things that Jeremiah condemned. There in verse 9, will you steal? Will you murder? Will you commit adultery? Will you swear falsely? Will you burn incense to Baal? Will you walk after other gods? And then come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name and say, well, we're free to do all of these abominations. He's rebuking them for the sinful things that they were doing during the week.

And then come to the house and say, well, you know, we're covered now. We've been to the house of God on Sabbath, and so we can go back out and commit adultery and, you know, steal and murder and swear falsely and worship our other gods because we've given God his place. People today, much like those in the days of Jeremiah, they feel free to practice certain sins that God has condemned, living in fornication.

Couples that are living together and not together, they are free to get married. So many cheating on their husband or on their wife, and yet they feel a freedom to do these abominations because there is a modicum of spirituality. Maybe they still read the Bible occasionally.

Maybe they still pray occasionally. Maybe they still go to church, but yet that doesn't give us a license or a freedom to do the things that God has commanded us not to do. In verse 11, the Lord said, is this house which is called by my name become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, I have seen it, says the Lord.

When Jesus came to the temple, he saw the abominations. He saw how people had made merchandise out of religion. He saw the money changers.

You see, according to their traditions, if you wanted to give to God at the temple, all you could give were temple shekels. They would not take Roman coinage. So these entrepreneuring priests set up a little booth, and they would take your Roman coins and exchange them for temple shekels so that you could give to God.

The only problem is that they would charge you about a 50% exchange rate. So they were merchandising. They were getting rich off of the things of God.

They had booths where they were selling certified, accepted sacrifices. If you would bring one of the lambs from your flock, the priest would examine it carefully, look carefully until he found a flaw in it, and then he'd say, you can't offer this. Look, it's blemished.

Your only hope was then to buy one of these little sheep that had the certificate, you know, approved by the priest. And the priest had a great business going in selling these sheep at twice, three times what it would cost you. Jesus mentioned how that two sparrows were sold for a farthing.

That's a half a cent. But when you wanted to buy one for a sacrifice, oh, they'd really clip you good. Profiteering off of the things of the Lord.

And Jesus, you remember, made a whip. And he began to go into this marketplace in the temple. He began to overturn the money chamber, the money changer tables.

He began to loose the animals that were there being sold and drive them out. And he took the whip and drove out these wicked men who were merchandising off of the things of God. And he said, you have made my father's house a den of robbers.

Thinking probably of what the Lord had said to Jeremiah, how that the people had made the house of God a den of robbers. And God is saying to them, you're trusting in this temple. And the fact that you're attending here for your salvation.

But the temple rich rituals cannot save you. Church rituals cannot save you. Singing hymns cannot save you.

It is only God that can save you by your putting your trust and your faith completely in Him. By your forsaking your sin and walking in the way that pleases God. The Lord told him, go down to Shiloh.

Take a look at Shiloh. See what's happened there. Shiloh was the place where they first erected the tabernacle in the promised land.

The first place chosen where the people would gather to worship the Lord at the tabernacle. The first place where the multitudes would come from all over the country during the great feast of Passover, Pentecost or Sukkot. And it was a place that was vibrant with worship as the nation would gather to worship God there at Shiloh.

Reverenced as a place where people met God. But Shiloh had become a ruined, desolate area. The houses were level.

The place where the tabernacle was once stood was just a pile of rubble. And the Lord is saying, go to Shiloh. Take a look.

See the desolation that is there. The fact that my temple is here doesn't guarantee my protecting this place. If your hearts are far from me, this place will be destroyed even as Shiloh was destroyed.

No, you dare not trust in the lying words of a man that tells you that your attendance at church, or your supporting the church, or supporting their TV ministries can gain you special favors with God, or a place in the kingdom of heaven. God is still calling people, amend your ways. Turn from your wickedness and live for Jesus Christ.

And God said, I'll watch over you and I will keep you from that day that is coming. It's interesting when on 9-11 our nation was attacked. The men of Congress stood on the steps of the Capitol and sang, God Bless America.

The leaders of our nation gathered in the National Cathedral to offer prayers. Prayers to God, to Allah, to Buddha, and in the other deities that might be out there that we have missed. We want to be politically correct and include them all.

So to the unknown gods, whoever you are, wherever you are. And then back to the legislative tables, back to business as usual. Thinking, well we stood on this Capitol steps, we sang God Bless America, you know.

God said, look, rend your heart, amend your ways. Don't live those wicked lives and just think that you can stand on the steps and sing God Bless America, and God will bless America. As you're cranking out legislation that says you can't pray in church for particular things.

Here's Jeremiah. The people are coming to the temple. Oh they're saying, oh the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord.

Probably one of the feast days and a lot of people were there. Here's Jeremiah standing there at the entry and saying, hey, amend your ways. Turn from your wickedness.

Don't trust in a life saying, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these. It's not going to do it. But if you will turn to God, if you will seek the Lord, if you will seek true justice, don't take advantage of the poor and the less fortunate.

Stop your abortions. Stop serving the other gods and God will help you and God will preserve your land. We are in much the same position today as were those people in Jeremiah's day.

Interesting, wasn't it, how many people were here the Sunday after 9-11? But that didn't last long, did it? It was soon back to business as usual. Back to the X-rated movies and videos. Back to the filthy lyrics of the

rappers.

Back to the old ways. And yet thinking and hoping that somehow God would bless America because our leaders went into the National Cathedral to pray. Interesting, Jeremiah was arrested for doing that.

Those leaders were saying, we need to kill him. And they actually were talking about putting Jeremiah to death because he dared to speak the truth. I dare say had some young man gone to the steps of the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C. when all of these dignitaries were going in to pray and had he stood there saying, don't trust in lying vanity saying the temple of God or the National Cathedral of God and all.

He would have been arrested just like Jeremiah. He'd probably still be in court trying to plead his case because people don't want the truth many times. They don't want to change their ways.

They want to go and receive a false sense of security and hope when they go to church. But they don't want to hear what God has to say. And that is if you really want security and hope for the future, then it's going to take a change of heart, a change of life, a turning away from wickedness and evil and a turning to God and seeking and serving God with all of your heart and soul and mind and strength.

And God will hear and God will bless when His people turn to Him with their whole heart. Father, we pray that You will keep us from deception, from that thought or idea that as long as we are doing religious things that we're okay. Help us, Lord, not to use the grace of God as an excuse for doing things evil, as a covering or a cloak for living a lascivious life.

But Lord, may we truly turn to You with all of our heart and serve You, Lord, with all of our strength. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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