

Search Me O God

by Dale Yocum

We need to pray the prayer of Psalm 139 to search our hearts and be cleansed from the deceitfulness of our heart.

Duration: 57:09

Scripture: Psalm 139:23

Topics: "Confession"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on Psalm 139, specifically verses 23 and 24. The congregation is urged to pray for God to examine their hearts and thoughts, to reveal any wickedness within them, and to lead them in the way of the Lord. The preacher shares a story about a doctor who discovered a hidden problem in a patient's x-ray, highlighting the importance of examining our inner lives. The sermon emphasizes the need to prioritize seeking God's kingdom and living in accordance with His word, as there is no second chance at judgment.

Transcript

Just two verses tonight from Psalm 139. Very familiar verses, I believe, to most of us. Psalm 139, verses 23 and 24.

Search me, O God, and know my heart. Try me and know my thoughts. See if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

Shall we bow in prayer? Heavenly Father, we thank you for your goodness tonight. How exceedingly wonderfully kind and loving, tenderly merciful you have been toward us. You have done far more for us than we can ever repay, than we can ever mention to thee with our lips.

We do praise thee tonight, thou art so good, so very good. We pray that thou wouldst touch afresh in this service tonight. You know this packed auditorium, you know every distraction that may enter here to draw minds away from thee.

You know those that are weary in body from loss of sleep or from long journeys. We pray that every contrary influence may be subdued tonight, that we shall all be united in our purpose to hear. Will thou give that unusual anointing we just must have if this service is to be effectual.

We pray just now that thou wouldst rest upon thy word and upon thy servant and upon the congregation that hears thy word tonight. May there be a ready response to the call of the voice of thy Holy Spirit. In the name of Jesus we pray, amen.

I want to speak about heart searching for a while tonight, as the Lord may give direction. Here in China a number of years ago when it was still open, there was an injured man who went to a missionary doctor and asked to have his chest x-rayed. The doctor said, I am a poor man, I have no money, I need this service but I can't afford to pay for it.

Would you please perform it for me anyway? The doctor said, well if you're too poor to pay for it yourself, we'll perform this service without charge. He turned the x-ray on the man's chest, examined it and said, I find nothing wrong in your chest, but let me explore a little further. He put the x-ray in the area of his stomach and he searched there and he said, ah, I found a problem, a real problem.

My x-ray shows that you have on a secret money belt with a considerable amount of money hidden away in it. You have a deeper problem than you thought you had. There are lots of people that go to doctors for x-rays, it would be good if they'd go to God for his x-ray.

He can find deeper seated problems than doctors. I believe that every one of us ought to pray this prayer, this prayer of the psalmist. Search me, O God, and know my heart.

Try me and know my thoughts. And see if there be any wicked way in me and lead me in the way everlasting. I believe it would be good if everyone, and we should never pray this prayer unless we really are honest about it, honestly and earnestly to pray this prayer.

Search me, O God. First I would like to suggest why we need to pray this prayer. Why we need for God to search our hearts.

And there are a number of reasons why we should pray this prayer. The first is that man does not see his own heart as God sees it. There isn't a one of us who in our own native ability has the capability as God sees it.

Our eyes are wonderful instruments, and with our eyes we see many, many things. But you couldn't even discern the shape or color of your own eyes. Your eyes are wonderful seeing organs, but they never see them.

Our hearts can discern a lot of things, but they can't discern themselves, unless God gives us a mirror with which to see our own hearts. David discovered this fact himself. He was a leader, a great leader, but he fell into sin.

He fell into repeated sin, adultery, murder, hypocrisy, and remained in that condition with his sin covered up for most of a year, we believe, before a man of God pointed a finger at him. Thou art the guilty man in the sight of God. And he saw himself and made his confession.

But for almost a year before God's prophet gave him God's estimate of his heart, he went along to his job. No wonder he would pray a prayer like this, Oh, sir, lest there should be in my heart any wicked way, and leave me in the way everlasting. When we come to the judgment, my friend, we are not going to be judged by our own estimate of ourselves.

Our opinion of ourselves will have nothing whatsoever to do with the judgment evaluation. When we come to the judgment, it won't matter one whit or what anybody else thinks before the judgment seat of Christ. And that word appear does not mean simply that we're going to have to be there.

It means that we are going to be revealed for what we actually are. We won't be known for what people think about us or our own self-estimation. We are going to be known and dealt with there for what God knows we actually are.

One of the most sobering, one of the most awesome passages of scripture in all the Bible is found in Matthew chapter 7, verses 22 and 23, where Jesus, speaking of the great day of judgment, said, And many shall say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name have cast out devils, and in thy name have done many wonderful works? Then shall I profess, I never knew you. Depart from me, ye that work iniquity. What a horrifying experience.

Active church members who in their own estimation have done mighty things. Oh, how gifted they are in prophecy, in casting out devils. Perhaps in speaking in tongues, perhaps in doing many wonderful works.

Their own self-evaluation ranks them very high indeed. They even argue with the Lord himself. They're so sold on their own.

They dispute the Lord's own judgment. But he has the last word. He knows exactly what we are.

They saw their gifts, they saw their service. He said, I see your sin. Depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

I can't describe, I can't begin to describe the horrifying experience. It's going to be for a vast... ...in your sight. Don't let me wait until that horrible day to discover too late, I'm not what I thought I was.

We don't see our own hearts as God sees them. The second reason is because the heart is naturally deceitful. Jeremiah said it's deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.

Who can know it? Nobody can know it. But he says, I, the Lord, search the heart. There's a deceitfulness about the natural heart.

The writer of Proverbs said, every way of man is right in his own eyes, but the Lord pondereth the heart. Isn't that an astounding statement? Every way of man is right in his own eyes. No matter how wicked he may become, no matter how treacherous, he has an excuse for himself.

He may be able to condemn a thousand other people for little discrepancies in their behavior, but he can manufacture an excuse for the most ignominious falsehood and treachery in his own life. The heart is deceitful. You don't have to go clear around the world to find this illustrated.

How many are there of us that find it easier to criticize the other person than we do to criticize... How many of us hear others criticized by a speaker more frequently than the speaker criticizes himself? Jesus spoke to a group of people and he called them hypocrites because he said, you can find the mouth in your neighbor's eyes, but you overlook the beam in your own eyes. It's so much easier to find the fault of the other person than to find the fault in our own life. That's a part of the deceitfulness of the natural heart.

Brother Leonard Ravenhill told about a large camp meeting in which one preacher had preached and another was to follow him in preaching. The first preacher spoke to the president of the camp and tipped him off a little with a little criticism of the man who was to follow and suggested he really knew this man.

He wouldn't be having him in the camp.

Then when the second man came to the president, he said, I'm surprised you wouldn't be having him in this camp meeting. The president set an appointment and called both of the men into his office. They met in the office and they shook hands and greeted each other so graciously.

They were rather glad to be there. They both assumed that they were going to be booked for a company. The president had them be seated and told them what I've told you here.

Told them what each of them... Now he said to the first man, you're not going to get your pay. And he said to the second man, you're not going to get to preach until you men get this straightened out. He went out and closed the door and left them there alone.

An hour later he came back. He found the man with red faces and swollen eyes and hands shaking and weeping and praising God. They had got it straightened out.

They had prayed through together until they had ceased criticizing the other person and started criticizing themselves and got their... Oh God, help! Search me, oh God! I have no capacity to be a critic of anybody else unless I can first criticize myself in the light of God. After I've taken the beam out of my own eye, that's the big saw log, I might be able then, in grace and meekness, to go down and help a brother pull that tiny splinter out of his eye. But not unless, first of all, I've had... Oh, this subtle deceitful... No, the devil uses this natural trait of the deceitful heart and causes people... They don't have a gift of discernment, they have a plague of critical spirit.

They are able to point the finger at the other person and it puffs them up with a great ability of discernment. No, it isn't discernment. It's a carnal spirit of criticism.

Out in my home state of Kansas a number of years ago, there was a holiness pastor. The pastor bore a burden for his flock and for this layman in particular. He went and visited the man, shared with him his concern for the man's spiritual welfare.

He said to the pastor, Pastor, I thank you for coming, but I feel quite all right. I don't sense any need in my heart as you seem to feel. If I have any problem, I'll let you know, but thank you, I'm getting along fine.

The pastor went his way. But he prayed more, and the more he prayed, the more his concern grew for this man and his spiritual need. He went to him a second time and he said, My brother, I don't want to appear hypercritical, but in my heart I have a longing to see you find a higher place in God's grace.

I feel you do really have a genuine spiritual need. God has laid it on my heart. Well, thank you, pastor.

I assure you I'm getting along just fine. I don't feel anything wrong. If I ever have any problem, I'll let you know.

Thanks for coming. The pastor went his way. What more can you do? It wasn't long after this until the man working out on his farm spilled gasoline over the hot motor of his tractor and suddenly his clothes flashed into flames.

He rushed down to the watering trough, but it was dry. He could find no water. He got in his truck, raced to his house, fell across the threshold of his own home, and as it collapsed he said, My God, why? And I'm not ready to die.

He was rushed away to the hospital. My brother-in-law called on him in the hospital, but he never regained consciousness. He went out into eternity, and those were his last words that passed his lips.

My God, why? I'm dying, and I'm not ready to die. A deceitful heart had puffed him up in his own self-satisfaction in spite of the tearful entreaty of his pastor, in spite of the true condition of his heart. He was deceived and went right on assuming he was all right.

My friends, in the heart of every unsanctified person there is a sinful, we have an inherent built-in liar in every one of us until we are sanctified wholly by the purging, the cleansing blood of Jesus Christ. I've tried to trace down this inner nature of sin to its very essence and find out what it is according to the Word of God. And the most clear and succinct description of the inner principle of sin that I can find anywhere is in Ephesians 4, verse 22.

Paul says, "...put off the old man which is corrupt according to its deceitful lust." If I were to give a biblical brief definition of this inner nature of sin, it is the deceptiveness of lust, deceitful desire, until from the very root of our being the things we desire are the things that are not good for us. A man desires that which is from his distorted heart until multitudes of people today would rather have a cheap lie than an expensive truth, because it suits their lust better. God went to Adam and asked him what he had done.

He wouldn't be honest with God. He pointed at Eve. She's the problem.

He went to Eve. She wouldn't be honest with God. She pointed to the serpent.

There's the problem. And ever since that, people have been pointing to somebody else. That's the problem.

Why? Because in the heart there's an inbitter that would rather buy a cheap lie than to pay for an expensive truth. Deceitful lust, right at the very root of our being, to what the unsanctified man wants. Make him to deceive others.

Yes. We need to pray this prayer. Lord, search... Revelation 22, we are told of those who love and make a lie.

They shall not find their place in the kingdom of God. But I repeat, in every unsanctified heart there's a principle that loves a lie. Loves a lie that protects its own image.

Loves a lie that builds up its own ego. Loves a lie that makes it comfortable rather than to open to that truth that makes it miserable. And truth, when at first enters a carnal heart, you have to be miserable before you can be comfortable under the presence of God.

So we ought to pray that prayer. This deceitful heart, even if it finally does come around to admitting it has a need, will postpone and procrastinate and look for a better day. I remember a young lady rather inclined toward the world.

She was asked about getting sanctified. Well, she said, any time God gets ready to sanctify me, it's all right with me. And never be sanctified with that casual approach to the matter.

This deceitful heart will hide behind a multitude of false promises. It will hide behind church membership. It will hide behind church activity.

It will hide behind official positions. It will hide behind the good word of friends. It will hide behind a modest attire.

It will hide behind an emotional experience. It will shout loud and long and hide a carnal, dirty, false, deceitful heart. I was in a camp meeting a number of years ago, a large camp meeting.

Many of you have been there. And a certain man about halfway down the middle aisle got up and sort of whirled around and clapped his hands. The president of the camp said, You see that man? Of course I saw him.

Couldn't avoid seeing him. He said he's one of the most cantankerous, one of the most critical, one of the most sharp-tongued, evil-spirited men in this whole part of the country. What was he shouting for? To cover up his inner nature? To make himself feel good and try to make other people feel like he was good? Hiding behind a religious front, an emotional display.

He would say amen to modest, to preaching on modest standards. But covering up a deceitful heart, a carnal disposition. Third, we need to pray this prayer because we can never be cleansed from the deceitfulness of our heart until we see it, confess it, acknowledge it, and pray for God Almighty to rectify the error that's in our heart.

God never sanctifies people. He never cleanses any heart when you're daydreaming. He only comes in His refining fires who know their needs, who have seen themselves in the light of Almighty God, who have fully acknowledged what God has revealed.

They haven't hidden a thing. They've been absolutely honest. And they're entreating God at all costs without any further delay to come and apply the remedy to their heart.

That's the only kind of people that ever get this blessing from above. Isaiah went into the temple one day. I don't know what he was expecting to see when he got there, but what he did see was a mighty vision of the exalted holiness of God.

He saw the Lord high and lifted up, and His train filled all the temple. And he heard the seraphim crying one to another, Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of Hosts! And in the light of that display of divine holiness, he saw his own sinfulness. He didn't make excuses for it.

He didn't say, I'm better than most of my kinsmen or my contemporaries. He said, Woe is me, for I am undone. I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips.

For mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts. The moment he made his confession, for that seraphim, and he said, thy iniquity is cleansed, and thy sin is purged. My dear brother, God has available for you a seraphim.

The very moment you get it, you want His remedy. I was in a revival meeting a few weeks ago. There was a young man who came to the altar a number of times.

I watched him come, and he'd pray a while, and he didn't seem to get victory. When the meeting came down to a close, he still didn't have victory. But I saw him some days after that, and he gave me an interesting testimony, or he gave it publicly, and I heard him give it.

He said when that first meeting closed, and he still wasn't sanctified, he had seen his needs, he wasn't satisfied. He went away to pray, and in prayer he felt like he ought to go out on a ten-day die-out. Now, that's a new term for you folks.

A ten-day, not a diet, but a die-out. So he took a tent, got his pastor to carry him, or carry him eight miles out in the country to a very heavily wooded area. He put up his little tent, he took no food along.

There was a brook nearby out of which he got his water to drink, and he determined he was going to stay out there ten days and eat nothing in a ten-day die-out until God came and satisfied the need of his heart. But the first day he started praying, his faith began to look up, he began to reach out to God. He said, I made an absolute consecration, held back nothing, and he said, Well, I think God would rather have it that way.

And he said he opened his Bible, and he saw those, he read it over and over again, He said, There was no wind blowing, the trees were not waving, but I heard a sound, and it was coming in my direction. He said, Suddenly something hit my tent, and the tent pole went down, and the tent collapsed, and I heard the sound going on by. The trees remained very quiet.

The tent went down, and I went down on my knees before God, and the refining fire of God came down about five days later. So it doesn't take ten days, and it really doesn't take a ten-day die-out. It does take a die-out, and you have to be wide awake, and you have to want this more than anything else in the world, and you have to be honest with God, for God will come and satisfy that.

Secondly, let us look for a while at how God searches our hearts. He has his way of examining our innermost being and showing to us what we are like. He searches us by his Holy Spirit.

Paul says, The Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. The Holy Spirit sees beyond what you and I can ever see, or what any other eye can ever penetrate. He sees the deep things, the hidden things.

He knows us exactly like we are. And if we ask him, that's his particular business. That's his specialty, to look into the heart of man and show us exactly what we are like.

It may be painful. It will be painful, until the work of surgery is performed that takes out that sinfulness of the heart. Dr. Samuel Keane, that dear old Methodist preacher of years ago, was a holiness pastor.

He had an elder in his church that was not sanctified holy, and didn't seem to be hungering or thirsting after the blessing. Dr. Keane said he prayed for the man repeatedly, earnestly, until he was sobbing outright. A little later he arose and made his confession.

I have been going along thinking I was so good, thinking I was so valuable here in the church. Never before have I honestly asked God to show me the condition of my heart, but he has done it tonight. I didn't know before how much of pride, how much of selfishness, how much of complacency, how much of carnality, there was in my life.

I want you folks to forgive me for not being the kind of leader I ought to be. They gathered in prayer, and this man was right at the center of the prayer meeting. And of course God in his willingness came and cleansed the man's heart, and took out that source of envy and carnality, pride and self-satisfaction.

Well, when the Spirit of God reveals these things in our hearts, he doesn't do it just to make us miserable. He does it to open the way for a wonderful cleansing stream to flow in our being. Oh, thank God for the Spirit's presence.

Don't let me hide behind anything, behind a furious testimony, behind something. Then God searches us by his word. The word of God is quick and puckle and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing through the dividing asunder of soul and spirit and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thought and intent of the heart.

In joints and marrow, the bones of our bodies are as hard as concrete. The figure that the Hebrew writer uses here is the figure of the priest slaying their sacrificial victims and severing their joints and opening their bones. This was a hard job to do, to break a steel-like bone and expose the inner marrow.

Those hidden inner chambers of hardness and concealment. The knife of the priest was able to split the bone and divide the joints and lay everything open to view. And the word of God, my friend, is concealed.

He's able to open it to view. Several years ago, in 1939, there was a lady missionary from Holland that came to South Korea. And out in one of the suburban areas of South Korea, quite a revival occurred under the unique ministry of this young lady from Holland.

She didn't have especially a pulpit ministry, but it was primarily a private ministry. She took the blessed word of God and she went from person to person, asking for the privilege of just questioning them about the word and how the word was being applied in their own life. She took the commands and the exhortations of God's word and asked them one by one, pointedly, are you living according to this command of God's word? And if they said no, she asked them to write it down on a piece of paper.

I am disobeying this command. I am a deceiver. I am a dishonest person.

I am a liar. I am an adulterer. I am jealous.

I am envious, or whatever their condition was. And one after another as she prayerfully and with the power of the Spirit came to them with God's word, one after another was broken down. There was a missionary doctor in that area.

He resented this young lady who was there going around probing into the inner lives of people. He said to his wife, I'm not going to have that young lady come bothering with me. His wife had a little more spiritual discernment and sensitivity than he did evidently, and she said, why not? What are you afraid of? Well, he said, the young lady has no business prying around into the inner lives of other people.

The wife said, she's just simply taking the word of God and that's the purpose of the word of God. I challenge you, husband. I challenge you.

If you're not afraid of this young lady, let her come and let her take the word before you. Well, he was a little abashed by this, but he said, all right, if you insist, I will. I ain't got anything to be afraid of.

The young lady missionary came to him with her Bible very humbly, very carefully and said, Doctor, I'd just like to ask you some questions about the word. Have you given serious consideration to Matthew 6, 33? Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you. He said, wife, of course I have.

I teach that to them. Well, Doctor, are you in every area of your life consistently putting God first and trusting him to add everything else you need into your life? Well, he said, young lady, well, I suppose, you know, well, to be honest with you, I guess I'm not really. She said, well, Doctor, here's a piece of paper.

Would you just please write it down? You say you teach this to other people? You teach this to the Koreans and you're not living up to it yourself? What category does this put you in? Well, he said, I suppose we might call this hypocrisy. Then would you please write it down, Doctor? I am a hypocrite. Come on, write it down.

Well, all right, if you insist. I am a hypocrite. That looks terrible in your own handwriting.

She wasn't finished. She went to other passages of Scripture and he was writing other things down. I am deceitful.

I am envious. I am complacent. I am proud.

I am self-seeking. Before that dear young lady had left him, she had a doctor in tears on his knee confessing out his true undone condition before God. She had found him so complacent, so self-satisfying, but she left him a broken man but looking up to Christ for his cleansing, to satisfy the need.

Oh, would to God that we... Word is able to do that. I'm just going to challenge us for a little while to turn to a portion of the Word of God and just let it search us. I want you to turn with me to 1 Peter.

Before we close this service, I just want us honestly and openly, if you have your Bibles, I just want you to open your Bible. And I want us carefully to look into the Word of God for a few closing minutes here. Lord, use this Word and search my heart.

We wouldn't have to go to 1 Peter. We could go to a hundred other places and find sharp, searching portions of God's Word ready to reveal us just exactly like we are in the sight of God. Pick out a few verses as we go here.

1 Peter 1.15 As he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation. And I would just like to ask you, and I want you to ask yourself, in all manner of conversation, that means every single area of my life, am I living holy as he is holy? Is my speech holy? Are my desires holy? Are my reactions holy? And Christlike. Are my ambitions holy for myself, for my family? Is my service, my conduct before God, before the Church, before the world, is it holy? And Christlike.

And I leave it to you to answer that honest. Let's be absolutely honest before God. Look in the 2nd chapter, verse 1. Wherefore, laying aside all malice and all guile and hypocrisy, look in the 2nd chapter, verse 1. Wherefore, laying aside all malice and all guile and hypocrisy and envy and all evil speaking, as newborn babes desire the sincere milk of the word.

This is the requirement for the newborn babes in Jesus Christ. Take that word hypocrisy. That's an ugly word.

None of us would be happy to write down on a sheet of paper, I am a hypocrite. But let me ask you honestly before the word of God tonight. Are you willing for this crowd of people to know you exactly as you are? Are you willing to be known back in your home church exactly for what you're worth? Are you standing before God honestly as He knows you are? Are you trying to cover up and pretend on a higher

level than what you know you actually are in your inner life? Write it down.

At least acknowledge it before God. I am a hypocrite. Envy.

Evil speaking. Has all envy been put out of your life? Or do you find that rising desire when somebody else gets promoted and somebody else gets praised and somebody else gets the spotlight to say, I wish that were me. I wish I could get that credit.

You'd rather resent somebody else getting the spotlight you'd like to have. Write it down. I am full of envy.

Evil speaking. Or whatever it is. Verse 11.

Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul. What's amazing has been amazing to me. Some people, gospel workers, missionaries, preachers, who in private have come to me and confessed the lustful things in their own lives that were against the best interests of their souls.

This is one reason I never want a TV in my home. There's enough out on the streets and on the billboards that would be seductive and suggestive. I don't want to import anything in my home that would put before me something that would war against the inner man of the soul.

I want to keep the strong, the play of lust, the display of fleshliness that always has and always will war against spirit. Are you allowing it? Just because others are allowing it? Here's what the word of God says. Abstain from those fleshly lusts that bring you down spiritually.

Yet you go on playing with the thing, tolerating the thing because it's popular and other people are doing it. The Bible says abstain. That doesn't mean get close to it.

That doesn't mean take a little of it now and then. That doesn't mean control it. That means have done with it forever.

You can't afford that. You've got to be strong men in days like this, standing against evil. Verse 12.

Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles that whereas they speak evil against you as evildoers, they may by your good works which they shall behold glorify God in the day of visitation. Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles. Now, that's the outside world.

So even though they are looking for something to find fault in you about, they simply can't find it. Your life is so transparently honest before them that God uses that life to bring them under conviction. Another thing that appalls me is the number of people that profess to be holiness people that have unpaid bills, that have bad debts run up, they owe the grocer men, they owe Bible schools.

You can write to them, they don't answer you. You can go and talk to them, they get offended at you, as much as if you owed it to them instead of they owing it to you. Old Sam Jones, it might be good to have him around a while longer.

He's retired to glory, a long time ago. But Sam Jones went into a certain place one time, went around visiting in the community, inviting people to church. He went to the grocer men, inviting them to the church.

The grocer men said, Mr. Nurse, I won't be there. There are too many dishonest people in that church. A whole bunch of them around here have talked to me.

Sam Jones went back to the church that night and told them the story. I said, I'm not going to mention any names tonight. But he said, I'm going back to the grocer men and if the grocer men hasn't been settled with by tomorrow night, I'm going to read out the names right before this congregation.

I'm going to read out every name hours into the afternoon. And if these things aren't settled, I'm going to read the list right out. This church ought not to be a problem.

Sam Jones went back to the grocer men the next evening. Then he said, I've never had a problem. You've accomplished that much.

You've called on me. Time to be honest. Let's look at chapter 3. It talks about the women here, particularly men have been mentioned.

Their adorning, let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair and of wearing of gold or of putting on of apparel, but let it be the hidden man of the heart, that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. There just might be somebody here tonight that's never been in this kind of a crowd before. I hope there are.

And if you're here, we say welcome with all our hearts. God bless you. We're glad you've come.

We hope that in this service, you can feel the love of God reaching out to you and touching your heart as it's never touched you before. Probably one of the first things you thought when you came in here, what a strange looking bunch of people. How peculiar they look.

How strange they act. That's probably what you thought. Well, I just want to tell you that there's Bible for this.

We're trying to live up to a passage in God's word that says something about our outward adorning is not to be for men to exclaim about and for men to behold, but we're to have an inner adorning for God to behold. There's a negative and a positive. It's easy for us to give more attention to the negative, but I believe God would give more attention to the positive.

Let it be the hidden man of the heart. There was a time when that hidden inner man was corrupt and deceitful. But something has changed in that inner man until now that hidden inner man is neat and quiet and peaceable and lovely and in the sight of God of grace.

He looks and sees that inner adornment and God is wonderfully pleased about what he sees. You can't see it. I can't see it.

It's in that hidden part of the heart where there used to be such corruption, such unloveliness, and God looks on it and he's so happy he just bubbles over with joy when he sees that kind of a heart. Has this come into your heart? Have you come to that place where you're willing to put away this outward adornment that man can exclaim over in order to have that inward adornment that God gets so happy about? Finally, verse 17 of chapter 4 says, The time has come that judgment must begin at the house of God. Judgment must begin in seasons just like this, when the word of God probes into our life and shows us what we are.

And we honestly say, Lord, I see it. I confess it. I want something to be done about it.

The prayer of the psalmist closes with these words, Lead me in the way everlasting. Lord, don't let me walk in a way that's going to be stopped short at the judgment. Don't let me go along thinking I'm all right, just riding comfortably along and I'll be among those people with that horrible revelation.

I never knew you. I had a shocking experience in my life a couple of years ago while we were in Korea just before Christmas. I found out that I could get a free air trip home on military aircraft because of former military experience.

I had some business to attend to and it would be so wonderful to see my new granddaughter and my two daughters here in the States. I called up and found this fact out just about two hours before the plane was to leave. And it was several miles I would have to go to get to the military airport.

But I hurriedly packed a few things in my bag. I grabbed my travel kit in which I keep my immunization record and other documents. I bade goodbye to my wife.

I caught a taxi and I hurried across the miles down to the air bay. I walked up to the desk where I was to register. I looked in it.

I thumbed through the documents and I checked it out and my passport. I took the passport out of the little travel kit and put it in my briefcase so I'd have it with me. I remembered it now.

Here I am at the airport. There's the plane out there. Here are the men ready to load up.

I said to the man at the desk, sir, is there any possible way of getting... I don't have my passport. Why, of course not, he said. You can't travel outside of any country without a passport.

I said, how long before the plane leaves? About an hour and 15 minutes. I hurried to the phone and called my wife long distance and said, would you please get another taxi and rush down with my passport? I said, ask the man at the desk. If my wife brings it, could I still get on? I can't promise you you can try it.

She grabbed another taxi and urged him to come, but he took a long way around through a back road through a couple of villages. She got there before the plane left and I hurried up to the desk with my passport. He said, I'm sorry, sir, the gate is closed.

You cannot get on. But I said, I have my passport and the plane is... I'm sorry, the load list is closed. You cannot get on this plane.

I turned away and I said to myself, Dale Yoakam, how could you be so utterly careless? You know that to travel you have to have a passport. It wouldn't have taken you five seconds to check, just check and see if your passport was in your travel kit. You could have done it in five seconds.

How stupidly careless can a man be to go off to the airport with a free flight all the way home spend Christmas with your children and your new granddaughter, but for five seconds of carelessness you're turned back from the desk. The doors closed. The plane roared away for the United States carrying others.

And I turned and went back home. And I said to myself, oh God, how can I thank you for this? How could I give thanks for such as this? And he said, you can be thankful this wasn't the judgment. So there are

going to be people right out of this congregation who are going to come up to the judgment bar thinking they're going right through, but they're going to be turned back and the gate is going to be shut.

If we'd only be careful for 30 seconds, just check, for an honest, an honest 30 seconds. I mean really be honest for 30 seconds instead of using the old cover-up guide, the old cover-up artistry. If we'd let the sham be pulled away, if we'd let all the covers be torn asunder, if we'd let all of the false front just be demolished, and for 30 seconds we'd be absolutely honest before God, we could be ready to go all the way through.

Lead me in the way everlasting. Lord God, don't let me walk in a way that turns back at the judgment with a horrifying, horrifying... I did have another chance. There was a later plane after I got my passport and I did get home for Christmas.

There was a second chance, but there's no second chance at the judgment. If we don't pray this prayer honestly here before God, we'll miss it at the judgment. There are no second chances.

No chance for somebody to run and get up your passport and come for the second plane. Brethren, we either settle this matter in the house of God, it's time for judgment to begin in the house of God. We either settle it in the house of God or we're going to miss it at the judgment.

Are you ready to pray with absolute honesty and total earnestness tonight? Oh God, show me what my heart is. Show me what you see in me and lead me in a way that goes on everlastingly. Give me any offensive way, any way that offends me, any wicked way in me, and prepare me to go on with thee for all eternity.

Shall we stand together?

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