

An Immediate Call to Repent

by Dan Biser

Dan Biser's sermon calls for an immediate and urgent repentance within the church to address the moral and spiritual crises facing society today.

Duration: 52:56

Scripture: 2 Chronicles 7:14, Psalm 66:18, Isaiah 59:2, Jeremiah 8:20, Daniel 5:23, Acts 3:19, Philippians 4:13, Revelation 2:4-5, Revelation 2:16

Topics: "Repentance", "Obedience To God"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the urgent need for repentance in the face of societal and church challenges, highlighting the prevalence of sin, evil, and the lack of urgency and true repentance in the church. It calls for a return to the first love, the first works, and the truth of God's Word, warning of the consequences of disobedience and false teachings.

Transcript

Good evening. I ask of you to take your Bibles and open up to Revelation chapter 2. A word I'll be bringing to you tonight is one of the most pressing matters upon our nation and upon the church today. We see with the judgments that are happening across our nation, we see the legislation from Colorado to Oregon legalizing marijuana.

We see the continued battle of abortion in the courts and the legislation that continues with that. We see the epidemic of drugs, prescription drugs versus illegal drugs and all that that's entailed with that. We see a continued spike in violent crimes in the last month.

Multiple deaths are shootings and killings. For those of you that follow some of the things that I write and share, murder suicides in the last two years has been a part of that. And so these things are continuing in a fashion that, as I stand before you in my 40s tonight, that we've never seen in our nation before as where we're at tonight with judgments, with sin, with evil, with wickedness, with the marching of hell on our nation.

And we are in a crisis unlike we have ever known in the history of mankind. You might parallel it to Sodom and Gomorrah. You might parallel it to the days of Noah.

But you better be careful with that because at least where we see in a North America church, there are a lot of good brothers and sisters. There are those who are passionate that have wept with me and prayed

with me and prayed for me. I love those people and they love me.

And these are underneath the banner and the name of Christ. And we're in a day and a time that those numbers are shrinking as far as organized, developed denominational churches. You might consider it to be a purging for the church today.

A lot of that is left to be unanswered, I think, by our own means and understanding. But what I want to bring to you tonight is because of these things, where's the church? What's the response of the church that is needed? Those of you, again, like I say, you've known some of the things that I have shared, preached, taught, wrote, stood on the platform and the convention floor of the conventions for Southern Baptists. Made motion after motion, a call to prayer.

And this year, 2013, they have taken that and incorporated it in a lot of the things that they're doing, which is great. But as I come back to it now is that I got a lot of people that they want to argue with me. They want to debate with me.

They want to criticize me that my calls to prayer is that, well, people are praying. Well, people are praying, then how come we're seeing more evil? If the church is praying, then how come there are more lost people today than there ever has been in history? If people are praying and the church is praying, then how come we got more divorces and more adultery and more fornication and more drug epidemic in the church than is out of the church? If people are praying, then how come there are preachers who stand in the pulpit and who preach half-truths and lies? These are the things that we're facing. So a call to prayer is one thing, and that's great.

But I want to give to you tonight a word that many of you might be familiar with in the Revelation chapter two and three of immediate call for the church in repentance. Now it is that revival to come, it always begins in this fashion. There is a call to prayer, and the church responds.

I would love to be able to stand here tonight to go over accounts with you of history that have revealed and demonstrated and shown historically that when God began to send and did send revival, he took a man, a woman, a group, a small group, and they began to pray. And out of that came the presence of God upon his church and upon the community and the land. Now that's what we want.

That's what we need. And there is no doubt with the epidemic of sin and evil that's happening in this day and time. This nation is having an emergency.

That's where we're at. Families are in emergency conditions. Our government is in an emergency condition.

Our education system is in an emergency condition. The church is in an emergency situation. What I'm telling you is that when there's an emergency, that the church ought to be urgent about what's going on.

And that is one thing we do not see today. We have more ballgames. We have more concerts.

We have more entertainment. We're in this Christian movie phase right now where we'll sit and watch a 90 to two hour movie and be entertained with them and not produce one iota of having that same kind of reflection at the altar or in the Word or in a worship service. Now we can sit and watch a movie for two hours, but we can't do anything else for two hours for the cause of the Lord of the Kingdom.

That's an imbalance. There ought to be an urgency in the church today and it's not there. This word tonight that I want to share with you that God showed to me and gave to me is something that I carry.

I pray about. I present as often as I can this manner of what God wants us to do. And there is an immediate reply here that needs to be upon us, upon me, for repentance.

And that is followed by God's mercy, favor, blessings, and goodness. But without that, people can pray all they want, but there ain't no repentance. Then we are guilty of that crime of the verse that Isaiah said, but Jesus repeated it when he came.

You profess me with your mouths, but your hearts are far from me. The heart of the church tonight needs to be examined by these verses because in Revelation chapter 2 and 3, Christ has come. Christ came in a manner to John on the island of Patmos in chapter 1. You can read that.

And isn't it a wonderful account in that description of chapter 1 of John trying to describe what he's looking about when he sees Jesus, the Christ. I mean it is in a glorious fashion there of chapter 1. But on the Lord's day, Sunday, the Lord's day, resurrection, Christ came to John. And when he came to him, he came in his glory.

And when he saw him, he fell down. Ah, that is one of the first things that needs to be understood when God shows up in a church service. We always say, let's all stand up.

Let's get up. And God says, no, when I show up, you get down. Humility.

When David Brainerd, and I believe it was in the 1700s when he was preaching in that revival, and he said from the left side of the church to the right side on that August afternoon on the Lord's day out of the book of Luke he was preaching, he said it was just like any other church service. But God came and he said every person that was in there, men, women, children, Indians, Dutch settlers, English settlers were there. And when God showed up, everybody went down.

It's the same repeat story of revival. And it's when God comes into the midst of his people and he deals with them. Are we ready for God to deal with us? That's a question here that is on my mind.

I know people are praying for revival. I know people want revival. I think sometimes is that we want revival because that will get us out of accountability, we think.

I think we want revival because that will keep us from being destroyed and having to go through judgment and hard times. And we like our ease. We like our conveniences.

We like having abundance. And he comes to the church when we get content and at ease and comfortable and we've lost sight of why we're here and what we're supposed to be doing. And he gives a word to us, repent.

And our response has to meet that. We've got to get back to this. It's not easy.

Nobody likes it. It's not hardly preached or spoken of. You're not going to hear it on the stadium churches that have what we would consider mega churches, over 5,000 membership.

They don't preach a lot on this. Praise God for those that do. But you know as well as I do that some of those old crusty preachers that froth at the mouth and lay the hair back on people, that's needed.

And we don't see a lot of that and we don't hear a lot of that. And that has been a part of the problem of how we got to where we're at. Why is there so much evil? Because of less of God.

Why is there less of God? Because the church left God a long time ago. Now I want to lay out before you a couple verses. And here in Revelation 2 and 3, Jesus shows up to John.

He has the seven stars in his hand and he declares what they are. He declares about the candlestick. He gives the number seven, seven being complete, perfect, about his church.

The seven spirits which minister in the church. We're in a situation today that church in North America is not like the pictures that we've seen of church in Nepal where if you're practicing and openly Christianity, that's a death sentence. Egypt, I just read headlines where a Muslim killed two Christians.

Pakistan, Muslims was outraged about something so they went in and they burned all the Christian homes, literature, and attacked in that. We see our style of church in North America is not like what the rest of the persecuted world is going through underneath the name of Christian. And so it may be that because of our ease, because of our freedoms and opportunities, that's being reversed.

And we're going to see a change in the near future about worship in the church. You go to Europe and see a different style of church where Orthodox Christianity, Catholicism, Lutheranism, a lot of the old aristocracy of denominational churches with great. I was in Sweden in a mission trip and we saw a lot of those who said I'm a Christian because my name's in the Bible at the Lutheran church and I was sprinkled as a babe and that's their salvation testimony, no repentance, no life, no understanding of God or the things of God, but in their mind they're saved and yet they live like humans.

And we see in Europe a different style of church. Now we are close to that because we're guilty of decisionism. Decisionism, do you believe in God? Oh wonderful, yes, yes.

Would you like to go to heaven? Yes, yes. Would you like to get baptized and join the church? Yes, yes. And we go through all these preliminaries, but again we don't deal with the issue at hand.

Christianity is given, was given, is given, always shall be given for the purpose of why Christ came, why Christ died, why Christ was resurrected, and that is to deal with the issue and the problem and the evil of sin. Sin in men, women, and children, and it's God, it's God that has to deal with it. So all of our antics of worship, all of our ideas of church comes back to this, that he established, not men, he, Christ, established.

So I want us to glean from this in a call of necessity. We are in emergency condition, we need to have an urgency because we're running out of time. And so share with you a couple of these verses out of Revelation.

Jesus begins to speak to the churches, the seven churches. First church that he speaks to in chapter two, verse one, is the church at Ephesus. So I'm going to read this particular passage from verses one down through seven, and then we'll go to the Lord in prayer, and I'll give you the other verses that goes along with this theme for us here tonight.

Verse one, Revelation chapter two, unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write, these things say he that holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, I know thy works, and thy labor, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil. And thou hast

tried them which say that they are apostles, and they are not, and thou hast found them to be liars. Thou hast borne, thou hast patience, and for my name's sake hast labored, and is not fainted.

Nevertheless I have someone against you, because you have left your first love. Remember therefore from which thou art fallen, in our first introduction to this, the word that's key for us tonight, repent and do the first words, or else I will come unto you quickly, and I will remove your candlestick out of his place, except you repent. But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches. To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God. Let us pray.

Blessed Father, we thank you for the opportunity here tonight, once again, to read your word, to be in your house, to be in your presence. Lord, you walked in the midst of the candlesticks. You graven the names of your saints on the palms of your hands.

You know us, heart, minds, our intents. You know our actions. You know us.

Lord, you are forever, same yesterday, today, and forever. So you know where we've come from. You know why we're here tonight.

Lord, you know what we'll face tomorrow. You know your church. Lord, you will help us to overcome because you overcame.

And so you've made a way for us. Lord, we are in desperate need tonight. Your church is plundering.

Your church is failing. Your church is faltering. And Lord, I stand to and fro throughout all the earth so that you might find one, find a group of remnant, that you might raise them up and be glorified in their prayers, their tears, their works, their labors, their doctrines, their teachings, their preachings, their service.

Lord, here we are. May our hearts be so inclined to that. May you, Father, meet us.

May you change us. May you fill us for your kingdom, your kingdom to come, your will to be done on earth as it is in heaven. And I ask it in the name of Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior.

Amen. I want to hold on to these verses that Christ spoke in chapter two to the church of Ephesus. I want to go back and give you one little quick verse that is a part of all this that is set in the motion.

And it's found over in the book of Jeremiah. Many of you probably know Jeremiah chapter eight. I often have reference through Jeremiah and Lamentations.

I see it as a very prophetic means for where we're at today. Jeremiah was one of the last true prophets to the kings of Judah. Israel had already been carried away.

Samaria had already been wiped out. This is around right down to the time of 600 BC, right when Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians are coming against Jerusalem. They're coming against King Zedekiah.

They've already taken away Jehoiakim and some of the other things that have transpired of carrying away the people, carrying away the temple gold and artifacts that were in there and the cups and whatnot. And God's getting ready to judge his people. The children of Abraham, the children of Isaac, the children of

Jacob, Isaac and Jacob, the children of David, the kings of David, who was given a covenant that says, if you follow me with all your heart, then I will bless you and I will protect you.

But if you turn away from me, then I will consume you and I will punish you and I will judge you and I will chastise you. And we have that same edict, that same warning from Christ to his church. You have the children of Israel in the Old Testament made of the covenant of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and the covenant with David.

And you have Christ coming in fulfillment of the promise to David, of the fulfillment of the promise to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, that out of you shall flow a blessing to many nations and a blessing to the Gentiles, the uncircumcised. And it is that you and I are here tonight because of the fulfillment of what Christ did. And out of that, Christ raises Jew and Gentiles, free and born.

He raises barbarians. He raises nationalities. And Paul did this in his ministry of going throughout their entire Roman Empire and reaching to Jew and Gentile and those that were heathens.

And he said, receive Christ and become a part of his kingdom. And out of that was the church. Now, that same appeal that God the Father gave to Abraham and to the children of Judah was, was that you are to be my people.

You are to obey me. And if you don't obey me, then there's a, there's a price to pay for that. And we as the church are falling underneath the same thing.

We are to be followers of Christ. Christian means to be Christ-like. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.

How can you possibly know the mind of Christ? It is infinite. We are finite. As high as the heavens are above the earth, God says, and I say, so are my ways higher than your ways, my thoughts than your thoughts.

And anybody that sits in meditation and understanding and tries to comprehend the ways of God understands this truth. We're in a place tonight by the church that we have departed from the ways of the Lord. We have not learned the mind of Christ.

And because of the absence of the mind of Christ and the ways of Christ, we have substituted them for men's ways, terminology of sociology, of psychology that I like to incorporate, humanism. We develop a pattern of what I think is best. We develop a pattern of methods and means and schisms and schisms and spasms and all those other things that are happening in the church today.

But it's not with the anointing and it's with the doctrine and it's not with the unction of the Holy Spirit. It is incorporated by the wisdom of men. And we hear a loud roar from the throne of God to his church.

Repent. World hears the same word. Repent from your evil works and be born again.

Turn to me and I will turn to you as a nation, as a world. And we have all the heathenism and we have all the darkness and we have all the lies of Satan that is inbred in people's lives and their ways of living in Africa, in South America, in Asia, in Europe, in all the continents and all the nations and all the cultures and all the kingdoms. Satan is very active by robbing men of hope, dreams, opportunities and salvation.

Christ came that his church might redeem the nations. But when the church loses the mind of Christ, when the church loses the heart of God and the ways of God, then we try to problem solve and fix it. And that is why we're in the case and condition that we're in tonight.

We have incorporated business schematics into the church for business and ventures. We have allowed for these things that have been working in the world to come into the church. A.W. Tozer, preacher for the Christian Missionary Alliance, many great books, a man of God, a new God, knew the mind of God, Christ, meditated.

Remember a man that was a pastor up in Moody Bible Church. And as he was pastoring there, he was invited by Tozer, who also was preaching in Chicago at that time. And he said, Tozer asked me to say, if you ever need help, brother, if you ever want to pray, meet me on the on the beach from April to October, from five o'clock in the morning till eight o'clock.

I pray every morning there and I'll be glad to pray with you. And so he went occasionally. And he says, and there at five o'clock, he says, Tozer laid with his Bible on the beach of Lake Michigan on his face prostrate before God, praying, studying, listening, waiting.

He said when he prayed, he said it was like being in heaven. Now that's hard to find today. Men that have passion like that, men that know what it is to have the mind of Christ.

And we have regulated the church now by the standards of the world. Now, what we see with decisionism and all the other isms that we've incorporated, we see people that come in the church and then they go back out of the church. We see people that are here six months and then we turn around and they're gone.

And somebody says, what happened to so and so? And you go to them and they'll say, well, I tried that church thing and it didn't work out. And now I'm back in the world. But if you ask them if they're dying and going to hell, they'll say no, because I was born again the same in the church and the church told me so.

We have a contradiction by what Christ said was true. What was Christianity and what is being born again and the need of repentance. Men want the best of both worlds.

They want to be going to heaven, but they want to live like the world. And Christ said no, die to self, take up your cross and come follow me. And if you put your hand to the plow and you look back to the world, you're not fit for the kingdom of God.

And these truths are not preached and proclaimed and taught to the people. And so they continue in multitudes in the church after this pattern, after this way of living. God roars from heaven by his prophets, by his preachers, by his intercessors, by the Holy Spirit, repent and do your first works.

What we have now out in the world are lost men, women, and children. What we have sitting mostly in the pews today of decisionism without any born again experience, without any repentance, hand on heaven, wanting to go to heaven, but living like the world in the pews, in the pulpits. We have darkness in the church just as dark as it is out in the world.

This portion of scripture is to say we cannot go on like this. God will not tolerate his church to continue like this. And you hear a loud roar, repent before it's too late.

Having said that, the condition that we're at, sometimes numbers can be skewed and it's hard to grasp is to say was that actually the percentage that we're dealing with. Let me give you numbers for a moment. And I'm not trying to skew them to emphasize my sermon tonight.

I'm not trying to paint a darker picture than what it is. I'm simply trying to give reality to you about why it is so evil in this present day. And we see all this evil and sin happening in our nation.

Why are homes in such evil and darkness today like what we're seeing? Why is the church so empty and so powerless like we see today? Where is God? And we come back to the truth. We come back to the essence of scripture. Jeremiah, the harvest has passed.

The summer is in. We are not saved. I have incorporated a lot of initiatives in talking and dealing with people when I have opportunities to evangelize.

And I've found that probably one of the clearest, quickest ways for me to deal with people is just to come out with a point blank question. Have you ever been born again? Have you ever been saved? Has anyone ever talked to you about your soul? Now, I have only come across a handful of people that did not believe that they had a soul, that they just believed that this life was all that there was. And I know that there is a fraction of people out there like that.

But I haven't run into a lot of them. Most people that I've run into, they believe that they've got a soul and they believe that there's something after this life. Even though they may not understand heaven and hell and how to get to these places and understand the scriptures on that, they believe in that.

And that's where I start with. I start with death and dying. And we go from there.

You know you're going to meet God when you die. To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord, we say, for saints. And I try to paint the picture of men standing before a holy, just God and hearing that caliber of words that we know in scripture to be true.

That he says to his redeemed, he says to his faithful, he says to those that have repented, he says, well done, thou good and faithful servant. But he says to those that haven't done those things, those that are still living like the world and those that have not repented, he says, depart from me, you workers of iniquity, I never knew you. Take this unprofitable servant and cast him into the fires of hell.

And we have scripture that leads us in these truths. Dealing with people. I have found that the majority in the church and out of the church have no understanding whatsoever about the summer has ended, the harvest has passed, and we are not yet saved.

The lostness has not settled upon the church, nor has it settled upon a nation that is steamrolling towards hell tonight. Now I know that there is a body, a remnant. They know it because it's their husbands and their wives.

It's their sons and their daughters. It's their grandchildren. They know.

They know that if they draw their last breath tonight is that they will never see them for all eternity because they're not going to hell. They're going to hell. Now picture that Jesus has given to us that says the truth of our reality, of our emergency tonight, is this that broad is the path and wide is the way that leads into everlasting destruction, into hell.

Many there be that go in there at but straight is the way and narrow is the gate that leads into everlasting life and few there be that find. There are 300 million people in the United States population. 300 million.

Out of that 300 million are the mainline denominations of church, Baptist, Brother, Methodist, Pentecostals, Charismatics, anything that is underneath the banner of church, home churches, organized church. There was only 10% of our population that are in church of some sort on any given Sunday. 30 million.

300 million population. 30 million attend church. Now that has nothing to do with how many say.

That's just attending church. Now out of that 30 million having listened to Leonard Ravenhill, having listened to Richard Owen Roberts, Henry Blackaby, different ones that have talked about this, is that there are carnal men in the pews of the churches that have never repented. They've never been born again.

There are pastors in the pulpits that have never been born again, but they're preaching and they say that out of that 30 million, 90% of the church attendance is lost and on their way to hell. That means there's only 10% that are truly born again in relationship with Christ, having died to self, living for him. Names are written in the book of life.

God knows them and they know God. That's 3 million out of 300 million in our population. The harvest has passed.

Summer has ended. We're not safe. Has there ever been a time in the course of history for the United States that has ever mirrored that kind of testimony and statement? Don't you think that with less than 10% of any county, of any state, of any region or location in this nation, less than 10% in a right relationship with God, don't you think that that would constitute for us to sit up and to say, what's going on? How did we get here? Is God not God? Is the Word not powerful and sharp as any two-edged sword? Is the Holy Spirit not able to do great and mighty things and miracles that when Peter stood up and preached with power of the Holy Spirit and said, repent, 3,000 people got saved.

John Wesley comes along, repent, 4,000 people get saved out in the field. What happened to bring us to this place tonight? We missed the moment that God has brought us to and now we are on the short end of time and because of this emergency of so much loss and the harvest is now over and the summer is now finished, we have gone from the planting season of April, May and June and the vegetables grew in the garden from June, July and August and September to harvest time of October even into November. We are now, we are now in December of our season of life.

The harvest has passed, the summer's over, summer and fall has ended. We are now in winter and we are not saved and for those that are burdened because there are so many in their families, so many in the communities and so much lostness in the nation, we are now in a place of urgency crying out to God, what do we do? Oh, let's have a call to prayer and so people are praying, praying, praying, Lord give us, give us souls, Lord build the church, Lord bring us more numbers and he says, I can't hear you because of Psalm 66, if I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me and God comes and speaks and is saying, you've got to repent and get rid of the sin and then my spirit can flow because there are five things that are commanded to us in scripture that are given to you time and time again and I speak it one more time to you, there are some things that we have to understand, without the Holy Spirit we can do nothing. You see again the idea of humanism, I can do all things, just do it, Nike slogan, just keep trying brother, people come forward on Sundays and decisions at the altar saying, I'm going to try better this week, new year's

resolutions, I'm going to try, that's all humanism and it's all failure, it's the soul that lays themselves down that says, I can do nothing but Christ can do everything, it is the soul that says, the Philippians that everybody likes to quote, I can do all things, through Christ which strengthens me.

Daniel chapter 5, Jude chapter 12, the very breath that I breathe, you breathe, is in his hands, the very life that we have of me having arms and being able to function, ability to think and to reason, education to read and to comprehend, mouth to speak, eyes to see, ears to hear, those are all gifts from God, any gift given from God is given, but just that kind of same gift can be taken away. Can I give you an example quickly, I know time I'm pressing on this because there's so much to cover, but let's go to the story of Samson, spirit of God comes upon Samson, he is a dude with great strength, he is able to slay a thousand philistines with the jawbone of an ass, he is able to take the two big gates on his shoulders and walk and dump the gates, he's able to break ropes, he's able to deliver himself from the hands of the enemy because the spirit of the Lord is upon him. The only thing he was commanded to do was to say, don't cut your hair, keep the bow of the knife right, don't eat any unclean thing, he falls in lust with Delilah, she cuts his hair, sin has entered in, spirit of God has departed and the enemy comes upon him because she has been promised 80 pieces of silver and he rises up and he says I will go out and shake myself as at other times and wish not that the Holy Spirit of God had departed from and he went out and he was captured and he was defeated.

That same man who had strength, that same man who had power, that same man who had eyes lost it all because of an act of disobedience. We go over to Jeremiah that I quoted and we come to that end of Judah, end of Jerusalem with King Zedekiah. Jeremiah comes to him, he is the prophet of the Lord, he declares to him if you go out and surrender to the king of Babylon and humble yourself, God will spare your family, God will spare you, God will spare the temple, God will spare the city if you obey, but he wouldn't obey.

Because he didn't obey, every gift that God gave to him was taken away. He lost his kingdom, he lost his family, his children were slain in front of his eyes, his eyes were put out, he lost his eyesight, he was taken into captivity, the city was burned, the temple was destroyed, all because of his act of disobedience. And it is the same tonight, is that men's choices of acts of disobedience is causing great sin.

And God is saying to me, because your sin remains, there is therefore the gifts that I have given to you, I have now taken back from you. And there is no gift from God, there is no power from God, because we have sinned, sinned, sinned away by our choices. We've been disobedient, rebellious, worldliness, lovers of self more than lovers of the Savior.

We've been neglectful, we've been unfaithful, we've been adulterers, we've been murderers, we've been drunkards, we've been liars, we've been thieves, we've done it all, and claimed that we were Christians, all the while heaven was bellowing out, repent. Now, the warning comes, in these verses that I read to you at the church of Ephesus, it comes in these following verses that I want to give to you, I'm just going to stay in chapter 2 tonight, there are many other passages that I could go to with this, I'm just going to stay in chapter 2 and pull out three instances of repent that has been given to these churches, as well as us tonight, because of the urgency that is supposed to be upon us, because of the emergency that we find ourselves in tonight. The first one is, verse 4, you left your first love.

Many servants, many servants have been preached, have been taught on this verse, about our predicament. We come into verse 5, the command, twice in this verse, the word repent is found there,

remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, repent, do the first works. We're doing works today, works have always been a part of the church, but he says the first works, that means you've got to go back to the book of Acts, and read again what they did, and how they did it.

This means is that we've got to go back to God's ways, and not the methods and means that is incorporated in the church today of worship, and teaching, discipleship, those kind of things. I think it can be a very simple, clear thing, get in the word, know the word, and know the God of the word. I think those two things, out of that comes, the effect of evangelism, comes intercessory prayer, predailing prayer, comes power filled lives, families, churches, that sees products of fruit, sees growth in those things, where sin is present, and we're not doing the first works, we're playing ball, we're watching movies, we're busy about making money, and living for self, and we've forgotten what the kingdom is, we've forgotten what the first works are, we hear that call, repent, and that's the church, that's denominations, you know how hard that is to get a denomination to repent, how hard it is to get a church to repent, and do the first works? You've got churches that are filled with people that says, I don't see any need to repent, I've got cars, I've got health, I've got family, I've got a job, I've got everything that I ever needed, why do I need to repent? Because all those gifts that you've been given are going to be taken away.

Don't you hear the lesson learned from Samson? Don't you hear the lesson learned from King Zedekiah? You're in that boat tonight without Christ. He allows for you to continue, our nation, he allows for it to continue, but if there is no repentance, what does he say? And if you do not do these things, I will come, verse 5, I will come unto you quickly, and I'll remove your candlestick out of its place. Now this is the church of Ephesus.

Somewhere along the line in revivals, devotions, readings, I don't know how it all materialized over the years, but I just thank God that it does. I thank him how he puts saints in my life, people in my life, books in my life that have taught me, shaped me, formed me about things that I wouldn't get anywhere else. Robert Marion McShane was a young man.

I may have mentioned a little while ago about David Brager. For those of you that know his wonderful account, I got a hold of his life and diary. There's two things there that you need to read.

If you want a good book to read and study about men that do the first works, David Brager is one. He was top of his class, got kicked out right at time of graduation, was led into the mission field, never married, in his 20s, goes out to evangelize the Indians. He knows that he has no ability on his own self.

He relies completely on prayer and waiting upon God, and God worked in a miraculous fashion. He contracted tuberculosis and died in Jonathan Edwards' home underneath the care of Jonathan Edwards' daughter. He was out in the wilderness, out evangelizing.

He wrote about his experience with them, about repentance from them that was worshipping the spirit, worshipping false gods, their drinking, their idols, and all the things that was in there. He caused them to see the error of their ways and the lies that Satan had taught them. He showed them truth, and God came in great fashion, as I told you, that August, where revival broke out, and everybody was affected.

It was the labors of his life, and it was preserved. Robert Murray McShane was another one like David Brager. In his 20s, comes into church at Dundee, Scotland, preaches with power, preaches and prays, weeps over the congregation and the people, and God just poured out his spirit when Reverend Burns came in because Robert Murray McShane had gotten sick.

He decided to go on a sabbatical, and during the sabbatical, he went to Israel to evangelize the Jews. He passed through Asia Minor, where the seven churches are. He found the place of Ephesus.

He found where the supposed church was at Ephesus, the foundation of the building of Ephesus, and it was covered by a cornfield. And he writes in his sermon, his commentary on the seven churches, Robert Murray McShane does, and he says, God removed the candlestick of Ephesus. I can't tell you the impact that left on me, that if we do not do the first words, if we do not repent, then I will come quickly and I will remove your candlestick.

That's any church, and in this area round about, you can go to old established churches that are sitting vacant. This church used to sit vacant with beer bottles smashed through the windows and people hanging out in the parking lot drinking and whatever else was going on because the church had departed, the pastor had departed, and there was no gatherings here, there was no fellowship here, there was no worship here, there was no truth preached here, and men came and used the holy ground of worship now to indulge themselves. God removed the candlestick, but we can thank God that he is able to take the candlestick and restore the candlestick.

Now this happens anywhere. I told you about Europe, I'm telling you about the United States. God does not need the United States to evangelize the world and complete his business and his kingdom safe, but oh, you and I might have the honor of being used by God and being a part of the work of God to save the nations and to reach the world with his glorious gospel, but if we do not do the first words, if we do not repent, he will remove our candlestick and he will find someone else that will do it and do it right.

Lesson to be learned in this is found in that first encounter. You left your first love and we've sold ourselves short in all these things. Do the first work.

Then we go over to verse 16. We're in another church now. He's speaking to a Pergamos and he says, repent or else I will come to you quickly and I will fight against them.

I will fight against them with the sword of my mouth, what we face today in the church of North America is false teaching doctrines. We see mentioned in that verse before this, the doctrine of the Nicoletans, that we see that there is a practice of lies, of deception, half-truths that goes out of the pulpits, goes into the church, into the hearing of the word. We have churches.

I grew up in this area not too far from here and I grew up hearing about a pastor that literally actually got up in the pulpit and read a reader's digest message to his congregation and pronounced the benediction and said God bless you all till we meet again. I know from watching television and the TV evangelist is that they preach half-truths to people. I know that there are congregations that never hear a word about hell or about sin week after week, month after month.

There's testimonies all over the nation of this kind of thing going on. If you do not repent and speak the truth, live the truth, proclaim the truth, know the truth, follow a lie to half-truths, I will come and fight against you. You can almost see that in the culture, in the outlay of the church in North America today, that God's word is fighting against us.

We don't have power. We don't have great movements of holiness. We don't have great fallings out of miracles and healings and whatnot, but we do have fightings.

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