

A Friend of Sinners - Part 1

by David Wilkerson

The sermon emphasizes the importance of discernment and the danger of Phariseeism, which leads to judgment and condemnation, and calls for a focus on restoration and forgiveness.

Duration: 39:16

Scripture: Proverbs 20:27, Matthew 7:3, Galatians 6:1

Topics: "Heart Examination", "Spiritual Restoration"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of having a searchable heart before God, allowing the Holy Spirit to continually search and reveal any hidden sins or areas needing correction. The speaker reflects on the need for focus and proper alignment with God's will, highlighting the significance of forgiveness, restoration, and love in ministry. The message underscores the spirit of compassion, restoration, and forgiveness as essential qualities for every believer, especially in times of increasing challenges and deception within the church.

Transcript

My message is something God's been dealing with me about. And I've always believed if you're walking in the spirit, you have a searchable heart. God has to be allowed to keep searching you.

You never get too old. You never get too mature in Christ that you don't need the searchlight of the Holy Spirit and allow him to turn on the light and to bring righteous holy judgment because of his great love for us. And this is something the past few weeks God's been dealing with me about.

And seeing this film, I'd not seen this before and brought a lot of memories back at my early days and how we started here on the streets of New York, street rallies. Our vision was for souls. Our focus was on the unsaved and the hurting and the fallen.

And I think now that in my 75th year, the Lord is wanting me to make sure my focus is right, that we're focused properly. What I say, what I preached this morning, I couldn't understand it until I looked at that film again and the Lord just confirmed it to my heart. This is something, this church doesn't need reproof.

It doesn't need correction. My message has nothing to do with correction, reproof, or anything else. It has to do with something God's saying to me.

If it applies to you, fine and well, but I'm speaking what God is saying to me and others. These messages of all the pastors go out all over the world through internet. So it's applied outside, especially to ministers' conferences where I'll be going.

I wanna talk to you, simple message, a friend of sinners. And in, don't turn to Matthew 11, 19, Jesus was given a name by sinners themselves and by Pharisees. He's called a friend of sinners, a publicans and sinners, a friend, publicans and sinners.

Now, Holy Spirit, I thank you publicly for the probing of my heart. I thank you, Lord Jesus, that you have made it possible for me to have an open ear. And I pray you give us open hearts and open ears to hear what the Spirit says today.

If any of us here need to be refocused, do it, Lord, by the power of your word, the persuasion of your word. Sanctify my words and my life and my body so that these words come from sanctified lips and that we would speak truth, Lord, that will be something that helps us on our journey in these last days, we pray in Christ's name, amen. There's a story in the Bible about a Pharisee named Simon.

This Pharisee invites Jesus to his home to eat. And he had gathered a number of his friends, most likely Pharisees. And this had to be some gathering.

You know that these Pharisees went to synagogue every day. They tithed meticulously. They were unscrupulous in their religiosity and they conceived themselves as being the holy men of their generation.

And they invite Jesus. Now, Simon has heard that he's a prophet. And I really believe when you look at the context that Simon is trying to detect whether he's truly a prophet or perhaps among his friends to discount him as a prophet, which appears most likely from the context also.

And so they invite Jesus. Now, it was a custom in those days when you come to a feast, you come to especially a man of prominence. He would offer you the customs of the day.

You've heard of this before. When you entered, they would give you a basin of water and a towel so you could wash your dusty feet because for shoes, sometimes the poor had some canvas tied around their feet and their feet would get dusted. There were no paved roads.

And that was the custom. And then you would be given a peck or a kiss on each cheek, on each side. And then you would give a little bottle of oil-based ointment of some kind to rub through your hair that was windswept or dusty.

And that was the custom. Then you'd be seated at the table and you would recline. They would recline around the table, leaning on an arm and their feet sticking out probably at the end of the couch.

I'm sure it seems to me like Simon had his friends and his peer group come first. And I'm sure he didn't want a reputation that he was not a gentleman, that he did not keep the customs of the day. So I'm certain they got the basin of water, they got the double kiss, and they got the ointment, oil-based ointment.

Jesus comes in. Jesus arrives. And he is given nothing but condescension.

He is not given water for his feet. He is not kissed. And he's not given any ointment for his hair or his head.

And he's taken to his place and he is seated promptly among those who've gathered. Now, I don't know what they were discussing at this meal. You know the Pharisees were always trying to ask him trick questions.

And I know that this had to be a theological time when theology was discussed. It doesn't tell us, but certainly there was something going on in that meeting of a test. And Jesus knew the hearts of these men, especially Simon.

And in the middle of it, somewhere, sometime in that meal, a woman from the street crashes that feast, crashes in, makes her way past the servants, past any kind of hindrance. And she comes to the table and stands right behind Jesus, weeping. Now, can you imagine the shock? She is known, no doubt, when the Bible calls the wicked woman, it's usually a prostitute in the New Testament.

She's notorious, they know her. And do you know the Pharisees would not be touched, especially by an unclean person. You were not allowed to be touched, not even your garment.

And this woman is now on her knees. And she's cuddling the feet of Jesus in her hands and she's wiping, her tears are flowing over his dusty feet and she's wiping, her tears, she's just cuddling his feet. And the shock of those Pharisees, Simon immediately said, uh-huh, if he were truly a prophet, he would know she's a wicked woman.

If he was truly a man sent from God, he would not be allowing this woman to touch him. Any woman, let alone this woman, a wicked sinner, a prostitute, and he's allowing her to touch him. The shock that went through that room, what they were thinking, how can they interrupt? Who let her in, this wicked sinner? Why should she come into a Jesus meeting? This is about theology.

We don't need a sinner in here interrupting our theological discussion. And then she takes an alabaster box, breaks the seal, and starts pouring that perfume on his feet and it waves through that room. And she does the unthinkable, absolutely unthinkable.

No decent Jewish woman would do it. And it's known that this is behind closed doors and this is what a prostitute would do. She took down her hair.

She released her hair and poured this perfume. And they're thinking eroticism. They're thinking all kinds of thoughts.

And looking at Christ, looking at Jesus as though he had nothing of God in him. Jesus, knowing Simon's thoughts, stopped and said, Simon, I have something to talk to you about. I have something to say to you.

Now, when I came to that, I read this account over and over again and I read it and the Holy Spirit stopped me here. He said, don't go any further. David, I have something for you to say to you.

He turns to Simon and said, Simon, I wanna talk to you. And folks, I wanna stop here just a minute because the Holy Spirit was showing me there are two things going on in this room. There are two spirits being manifested.

Here's a spirit of Phariseeism. Here's a spirit that says, I am better than this woman. These men are thinking, we are holy, we are righteous, this woman is wicked.

And it's a judgmental spirit. They're judging her, they're judging Christ. There's nothing but judgment in the room.

That there's another spirit and that's the spirit of forgiveness and restoration. And that's what Jesus is manifesting here. And when he says, Simon, I have something to say to you, he gave a parable.

He said, there were two men that owed a debt. One owed 500 pence and another owed 50 and they had nothing to pay. So he frankly forgave them both.

Simon, which one would love the most? And Simon said, well, I would imagine, I perceive that it would be the one forgiven the most. And what Jesus is really saying, and Simon, I think, got the message. Simon, you think you're the one that needs just a little forgiveness.

You're the one that's been forgiven so little. And this woman over here is the one who's been forgiven so much. But Simon gets the message, it's the other way around.

Simon is the one in his self-righteousness, his unforgiving spirit, this judgmental spirit that Jesus is trying to convey to him. You're the one because you don't know your heart. This woman knows her heart.

She knows the wickedness and depravity that she's been delivered from, that she's been in. And she comes here, she detects your wrath. She knows she's unwelcome here, but she's not judging you because she's come unto this spirit, this forgiveness.

She's been restored, and you can't see it. You're not into restoration. You're not into forgiveness.

Jesus had denounced this Pharisee. Nothing he hated more than the Phariseeism of his day. The best description I have read of the description of a Pharisee is one who monitors the sins of another while justifying himself.

One who monitors the sins of others while justifying himself. And Jesus was trying to say something. He said, in one of these, what I believe is being said here without words is Jesus said, I came here, yes, because I love Pharisees, I love everyone, but Jesus had made his statement about Phariseeism.

He had turned to these men who were robbing houses, they're robbing widows' houses. Can you imagine if they were just robbing widows' houses? They were taking away the houses of widows and saying this is for a righteous cause. Set themselves up as judges before the whole world and were taking these things that didn't know their own heart.

They did not know what was in their own spirit, but they knew could judge what was in everybody else's heart. Taking, trying to take the speck out of a brother's eye while having a beam of their own. You see, they're two spirits, and so I put myself into that story because the Bible said we're to examine our hearts and examine by the word and by what we read.

Folks, if you read the Bible without trying to put yourself in the picture, you're missing the point. So I put myself, and of course, you know what I judge myself to be. What spirit of I am, am I of? Of course, I'm the spirit of Christ.

You know, if I could say that, you saw the picture, didn't you? Here I am. There's no Pharisee in me. My goodness, I'd give my life to this thing.

That's what I thought. You see, we would all, most of us sitting here would think that about ourselves. I'm not a judge.

I'm not that way. I'm not the Pharisee. I'm not a Simon.

That spirit's not in me. Now, folks, I'm not trying to dig up something. I'm not trying to put you under condemnation or guilt.

I know where I stand in Christ, but I also know what's in my heart at times. I know that there are times that I have allowed envy, I have allowed jealousy, I have allowed things in my life that were unlike Christ. And those were the times I was most judgmental of others.

When I was in my own, not recognizing these things that were in my own heart. This parable, who loves the most? And Jesus is saying, this woman, she's not angry at you. She has the capacity to love now because she has understood forgiveness.

She's understood what God has done for her. And even though she knows she's not welcome here, this woman will not judge you, but you sit here judging her. Simon was told, I'm sure was reminded what Jesus said to the Pharisees, including himself in that group.

That which comes out of a man does not defile a man. For from within it, the heart, out of the heart of men proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornication, murder, theft, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these comes from within the heart of man.

And these are the things that defile the man. You see, that says to Simon, you're the sinner. You're the one who needs the forgiveness.

Now, Jesus loved Pharisees because one of the first men he was going to call to evangelize the New Testament church was a Pharisee named Saul. And he would have the honor of having Christ visit him personally. So the Lord truly showed his love for Pharisee, though he hated Phariseeism.

In my 50 some years of ministry, I have seen such foolishness in the church. I've seen and heard such false doctrine. And I've taken a stand just like Jesus did.

I've taken my stand. The pastors of this church have taken their stand and that's what God's told us to do. He named these Pharisees.

He called them a time vipers. And he said, they're blind. And Jesus denounced Phariseeism, though he loved the Pharisee, he denounced it.

Those things have to be exposed. Shepherds are called to protect the sheep from the wolves. And there are so many wolves in the world today, especially in ministry.

And they come against the body of Christ. They come against the true church of Jesus Christ and they have to be exposed. And Jesus did that.

He made his statement clearly about Phariseeism. But you see, here's where we're at. I just read a survey.

This was research that's just been released. In the United States, there are 3,700 Pentecostal denominations. 3,700 various Pentecostal denominations.

In the world, there are 27,000 Pentecostal denominations. In Nigeria alone, there are hundreds of denominations of Pentecostal denomination. I'm not talking church, I'm talking denominations.

The Assemblies of God being the largest. Now, most of these churches are preaching sound doctrine. Many, many are preaching sound doctrine.

Great preaching. Folks, I've heard recently on the radio some various pastors, Baptist Methodists. I've heard some powerful, powerful preaching and you know they were men of God.

And they were preaching Christ with such majesty and power. And great soul winners. Winning souls or churches are filled with people who've been saved under their own ministry.

But here's what we're facing. Such, there is coming, we have seen just the beginning, but what is coming to the church of Jesus Christ in the days ahead. And it's going to multiply such, we are going to hear such foolishness.

We're going to see such wickedness. We're going to have, the Bible said, men who come as angels of light. That means they're going to be attractive.

It means that they're going to be glib. It means that they're going to be educated. In other words, they're going to speak well.

They're going to look good. They're going to preach a measure of the gospel. They're going to have enough gospel that unless you know where you stand in Christ, unless you're founded on the word of God, you'll be carried away with the wind.

And it is going to get so incredibly maddening. I was in a place recently where they had the, television was on. It was a fundraising program, television fundraising program.

And I was so stunned. I was so shocked by what I was hearing. It was, you just, it was like glued to us.

I can't believe this. And I finally was sitting on the other chair, just burying. And then a evangelist, handsome, well-spoken, powerful, got up and he took the biblical inheritance, which is Christ.

And he promised the people, if you give so much, you're going, I'm promising you somebody going to leave you inheritance. And he told a wild story. He said, some woman gave \$100 and she got an \$830,000 inheritance in the next few weeks.

I am so angry. I stood up and I said, I'm going to name him. I'm going to nail him.

The other said, no, you're not. Leave him alone. Leave him alone.

He said, no, the blind need the blind. They're going to the ditch. They close their ears, they close their eyes.

He said, go to the ditch and wait. Be there to restore. Because these men will not listen, they will not hear.

You see, I was in my flesh. I was in my flesh. Yes, their spirit and yes, I want to defend the gospel.

But you see, Jesus made his statement. He made it clear where he stood. He denounced the Phariseeism.

And then the disciples came to him one day. And this is later in the ministry of Christ. And they said, don't you know the Pharisees are offended by what you say, what you preach? And Jesus said, leave him alone.

Just leave him alone. Then he said, he gave those words. When the blind lead the blind, they're headed for the ditch.

And he said that in love. He said, and what Jesus is saying, and it's born out in this story. When Jesus turns away from Simon, Bible says, and he turned away.

He turned to the woman. As if to say, look, I've got kingdom work to do. I can't stop here with you Pharisees.

I can't stand here with your false doctor and get so involved because I have something to do here. And I came here to show you what the focus is. It's on this wicked woman being delivered.

It's on restoration. It's on forgiveness. I thank God for this church.

This church has become a center of restoration and forgiveness. There are pastors that come here once a month, meet with Pastor Carter and the staff. And they know that they're welcome.

They know that they will not be judged because there's a spirit of love. There's a spirit of restoration to restore pastors that can pray together and minister to one another. And that is growing.

But you see, for me at 75 years of age, God is saying to me, David, you've made a statement. There may be times I will have you make strong statements. And I'm not backing away from anything that the Lord has told me in the past.

Otherwise, I would be saying that the Holy Ghost didn't know what he was doing in or through me. There are times I have spoken in the flesh. Sometimes my zeal has been misguided.

Sometimes, one or two times, I've named names that I should have never named. But you see, at 75, I feel something of that spirit that was in that room with Simon, where he turns away from all of that. He turns to the woman and said, this is what it's all about.

Woman, your sins are forgiven. Your faith has made you whole. 3,700 Pentecostal churches in America, not including the Charismatics, and others.

And folks, what I've seen and heard in the last month is so overwhelming. And I know what the enemy wants me to do. I don't know what he wants anyone else to do here in America.

But I know what he wants me to do. He wants me to focus now on winning souls and going to the fallen and to the lost to restore those, those that are in the body who have fallen that need to be restored. And you'll find that in Galatians 6.1. Could you go to Galatians, please? Go to Galatians, the sixth chapter, the first few verses.

Can I, before we go into this, can I preface this? It's going to get so bad, we would spend our whole time putting out fires. It's going to get so bad, it has to come to this, that every member, everyone who calls this church your home, and I say this to any church anywhere, or people who've been under the precious word of God, where the word has been pure, where the word has been straight, every one of us should have discernment, where you don't need constantly, you don't need to have someone discern for you what is of God and what is of flesh. You should be able to, if anybody invites you to any meeting and you see what is flesh, you should not be attracted.

Otherwise, there's blindness there, and the purpose, and you could sit here and hear everything from the word of God. You could hear every preacher, you could hear me, you could hear Pastor Carl, you could hear all the pastors, but if you don't have by now discernment, if you can't tell, you should be able to tell your children and your neighbors that are getting into error, you should have the knowledge of God. You should be so strong in the Holy Spirit, so strong in the word of God, that you don't need a prophet to tell you, though God has prophets, and I believe in this with all of my heart.

Before a holy God, my heart is open to stand for this congregation or any congregation and expose sin, expose false prophets. But you see, God's showing me right now my own heart. First of all, I have to judge my own heart.

I can't stand and talk to you about the faults of another minister or ministry. If I know in my heart, and before God this is for me, this is not reproof for this church, I would never ever do that. But God is speaking to me, and I don't know who else he's speaking to.

You see, I know my sins are under the blood, but I have felt, when I've looked at some of this stuff that's coming, and I get so spiritually angry inside, and then some of the flesh crops in, and I saw God, I didn't know it, but there's some jealousy in my heart. And you see, until I deal in the light of the Holy Spirit with that, those little seeds of jealousy or envy, now I'm getting very down and practical, and you may think I'm too vulnerable, and it's my age, it doesn't matter to me much anymore. Because you see, I used to have those crowds, and I used to have that, just some little things of envy, and then I began to see, I sat in my study last week, preparing this message, and God was showing me my heart in the times that I preached the loudest and the hardest of evils creeping into the church, and the Lord began to show me what was in my heart, and I wept like a baby, because there were things in my heart, those thoughts that were so un-Christ-like.

And that's what's going on in this room. There's another spirit, there's another manifestation of the spirit of forgiveness and restoration. Paul the Apostle in chapter six of Galatians, beginning to one, he's talking about the focus.

Now, brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness, considering yourself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. For if a man think himself to be something when he is nothing, he deceives himself.

Let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone and not in another. For every man shall bear his own burden. See what it says, every man's gonna bear his own burden.

At that point, he's saying every man's gonna stand before Christ and answer for his own actions. He's not gonna answer for your brother, for anyone else, but you're gonna answer for yourself. And that's said in great love from a weeping apostle.

But he says, bear one another's burden in verse two, and so fulfill the law of Christ. Folks, now that I'm 75, in a short time, how do I finish my course? I want to come to this place, you see, and so fulfill the law of Christ. What is the law of Christ? What is the commandment he's talking about, the law of Christ? He said that the law is completely fulfilled if you love God and love your neighbor as yourself.

It's love. It is love. Bear you one another's burdens, and by this or so, you are fulfilling the law of Christ.

I can't tell you how many ways I've tried to please Christ. Lord, I pray prostrate me before the throne. Give me a weeping, broken spirit.

God, give me a greater love for your word. In so many ways, I've tried to please God over the years. When I came into covenant, I laid that down, but you see, if you really want to see what God wants out of us, how to fulfill the law of Christ, it's bearing one another's burdens, and that poses the question, that's fine.

I'm told that I should bear other burdens, but how? How do you find the need? How do you take another's burden if you don't know what it is? How do I bear your burden? And of course, the greatest burden upon any Christian would be sin or sinner, the burden of sin. I can't take on that burden. That's the burden of Christ.

You and I cannot take on the burden of another person's sins. We cannot condone another's sin, but we can pray for that spirit that was being manifested in Simon's house, and that was restoration and a spirit of forgiveness. I read the story of two great preachers, George Whitefield and John Wesley.

These were two of the greatest preacher's contemporaries of their time, great preachers, but they had a doctrinal difference on sanctification, and their followers were quite vicious against the others. One believed in total sanctification instantaneous, the other in sanctification in growth, and the contention got pretty strong. George Whitefield, a mighty preacher.

They both preached the outdoors to thousands of people. Many, many thousands were saved. John Wesley founded the Methodist Church.

George Whitefield was one of those powerful preachers of any generation, yet they contested one another on this doctrine. And one day, one of George Whitefield's followers came up to me and said, is there any possibility that we'll see John Wesley in heaven? What he's saying is, how can he get to heaven with this false doctrine? George Whitefield answered, he says, no, we won't see him in heaven. He's gonna be so high and so close to Jesus, we can't see him.

Paul called that enlargement of heart. He wrote to the Corinthians who sneered at him. He wrote to the Corinthians who accused him of false doctrine and misrepresented who he was, and he wrote a letter to me, said, my mouth is still open to you, and the Lord has enlarged my heart toward you.

And that's what I'm trying to say. God, take the narrowness, the exclusivity out of my heart so that I can see Jesus in others, that I can, and here's how the Lord dealt with me about how I can take on the burden, take on another burden, the burden of the fallen. It's restoration.

If you and I go to the Holy Spirit, and with this, I'm gonna close. If we go to the Holy Spirit and say, Holy Spirit, and folks, I don't believe in living in self-examination all the time. Not at all.

But there comes a time when you say, Lord, I'm gonna live by this word, and then the word comes to you with a sword and goes right to the cancer, goes right to the heart, where you say, dig it, Lord, get to it. I'm ready, I'm open because I don't want it, I don't want to have any of this Pharisee-ism in me. And when you allow the Holy Spirit to do that, and then you pray, Holy Spirit, I want the spirit of compassion.

I want the enlarged heart. Lord, I want that spirit of restoration where I see somebody that's fallen. I want to take away the reproach of their sin.

I don't want to go to them judgmentally. Somebody in the church that has fallen into sin, somebody that's headed for divorce, they don't need somebody to tell them what's wrong. If you do it, it has to be in what Paul talks about, the gentle spirit.

He talked about those that were caught in a snare, and he says, in meekness, restore them. I don't have that gentle heart yet, but I'm asking God, I'm asking the Holy Spirit for that gentleness. I'm asking the Lord for that kind of spirit that I could once again see the needs of hurting people.

That should be, I don't know if this is getting through to you at all, but I know one thing, that when God begins to give you the spirit and enlarges your heart, you take off so many limits. You don't see through these narrow lenses anymore, and you say, oh God, give me that. Then I believe that's a magnetic pull.

Just as the sinners were magnetically pulled to Christ, I believe that when you have that spirit, you will attract need. The Holy Spirit does that. Holy Spirit is the one who woos.

He's the one who calls. I love being around a gentle spirit. I love to be around these pastors.

That's one thing I miss when I'm overseas or have gone more than anything else is to be around these men of gentle spirit. And you can preach with power and authority. But I want more of that, and I would pray that be your prayer here today also.

Lord, I want to be a forgiving person. All who have hurt me or done me wrong or grieved me, Lord, I want a forgiving spirit. And I want that forgiving spirit to be the river of life that flows out of me and brings healing to others.

That water that springs up of the Holy Spirit is grace, it is mercy, it is restoration. He said, do this and consider yourself. That's what he, Paul the Apostle said.

I read it to you again. Brother, if a man be overtaken of fault, you would are spiritual, restore. And he makes the rule of spirituality, the spirit of restoration in a spirit of meekness.

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