

The Ministry of Reconciliation

by David Wilkerson

The Ministry of Reconciliation is a message of hope and love that tells us that God has sent his Son to close the distance between himself and sinful mankind, and that through faith in Jesus Christ, we can be reconciled to God and experience his love and mercy.

Duration: 55:36

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 5:18-20

Topics: "Grace Of God", "Christian Reconciliation"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of sticking to the message of the grace of God, regardless of the temptations and sins of the world. He references the apostle Paul, who remained steadfast in his preaching of the gospel of grace, even in perilous times. The preacher encourages the elders of the church to feed the flock of God by focusing on the subject of grace, which has the power to build up and sanctify believers. He also highlights the role of believers as ambassadors of reconciliation, urging them to be reconciled to God and share this message with others.

Transcript

This message is one of the Times Square Church pulpit series. It was recorded in the sanctuary of Times Square Church in Manhattan, New York City. Other tapes are available by writing World Challenge, P.O. Box 260, Lindale, Texas, 75771 or calling 903-963-8626.

None of these messages are copyrighted, and you are welcome to make copies for free distribution to friends. I want to talk to you this morning on the Ministry of Reconciliation. The Ministry of Reconciliation.

If you have your Bibles, I mean, I know you have your Bibles. Silly question at Times Square Church. By the way, welcome to all our visitors.

We trust that your visit here, whether you're in the annex or one of the rooms, you're in the Manatorium, that the Lord will have touched your heart and you know you've been in his presence. And by all means, if you're in the annex, come to the main auditorium and ask where the hospitality room is, and please get a free message tape, one of our tapes, and meet some New Yorkers and have some fellowship and some refreshments before you leave the church. 2 Corinthians, the fifth chapter, please, verses 18 through 20.

2 Corinthians 5, 18 through 20. Are you ready for the Word? Amen. Well, I'm ready to preach it.

2 Corinthians 5, verses 18 through 20. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the Ministry of Reconciliation, to wit, or in other words, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us.

We pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, they sang in the choir just a moment ago, if it weren't for the grace of God, we would have never made it.

How true that is, the grace of our loving Savior. And I pray, Lord, that you open up wide the Ministry of Reconciliation to us, the Ministry of Grace, the love of God. I pray, Lord, that you speak clearly.

Holy Ghost, come upon me. Let my words find a mark in the hearts of every open vessel. Open our ears, our eyes, and our understanding.

Lord, in these days we must have the word hidden in our hearts. We need a revelation of who you are. Oh, Holy Ghost, speak.

Take my words and take them deep into our hearts, and change me in the process of preaching this grace, I pray. Lord, sanctify us to hear and to do the word of the living God. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

Now, these, you know, are the worst of times. We live in a world that's spinning out of control. We're living in the very days that Jesus foretold.

He said men's hearts will fail them for fear, for looking after those things that are coming on the earth, for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. I told you about Wall Street putting on doctors and an ambulance standing by because those who are dying of heart attacks on Wall Street floor. Men's hearts failing them for fear.

Jesus warned there'll be great distress in the land, wrath upon the people, for these are the days of vengeance upon earth, distress of nations with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring. Now, these are the words of Jesus, not a prophet, not any preacher. These are the words of Christ himself.

He also said in the last days there would be a falling away in the church. There would be a great turning away to false doctrines. There'd be a falling away in his very house because iniquity shall abound.

Jesus said the love of many shall grow cold. False prophets shall arise and deceive many. That day shall not come except there come a great falling away first.

And the Holy Spirit has warned us that in the last days the church will be inundated with false doctrines and doctrines of demons and devils. The Spirit speaketh plainly that in the latter time or the last days some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and to doctrines of devils. Paul warned night and day with tears, grievous wolves will enter in among you, not sparing, in other words, having no mercy on the flock.

They will speak perverse things and they'll draw away disciples after them. Folks, there are perilous times. Jesus said perilous times are coming.

They're going to come. Paul the Apostle preached the gospel in perilous times similar to ours. He knew that he ministered on the brink of judgment.

He knew well that prosperous Israel and Jerusalem would soon be invaded from the north. The army of Titus would come down. And he knew that Jesus said that the temple would be destroyed.

Not one stone would be left upon another. He said the city would be destroyed. He saw his nation disintegrating morally on all sides, just like today.

They were falling into gross immorality. They were pleasure seekers. In fact, he described his time as people committing sins that are too shameful to even speak of.

He said it's a shame to even speak of what they're doing in private. Paul was devastated by the falling away in the church of Jesus Christ so soon after Pentecost. It broke him to tears.

He was wounded by the perverse things creeping into the church. He couldn't understand all the strangeness, the doctrines, ministers of the gospel posing as ministers of light who were actually devils. He saw so many being deceived by false prophets and merchandising teachers who were selling the gospel for profit.

The religious leaders of his time hated Christ. The priesthood was corrupt, the Bible said. They were robbing widows.

They were cheating the poor. The vipers that Jesus despised were ruling the synagogues. And Paul himself ministered to a people in Corinth who had become so corrupt they were indulging in adultery, unspeakable fornications.

They were committing incest in Pentecostal churches. They had itching ears running after teachers who gave them what they wanted to hear. They were departing from the faith, giving heed to doctrines of devils.

They were gossiping. They were backbiting. They were slandering.

They were suing one another, brother suing brother, drunkenness and pride. And folks, it all sounds familiar. My point is that Paul the apostle ministered in troubled times similar to ours.

Now, of course, sin is on the increase. We have a greater population. There are new inventions.

You could have tried to tell Paul years ago what this generation would face in the way of exotic temptations. Television, theater, pornography printed and theater and video, sex and all of these things would have bogged his mind. He could not have imagined it in his mind, the kind of exotic temptations and sins that this generation faces.

And yet Paul said there was going to be a great turning away sin coming in perilous times that were unknown and unheard of previously. Now, we ask the greatest preacher of all times, other than Christ himself, Paul, what do you say the message is for perilous end times? What are the oracles of God? What do you say to a nation? What do you say to God's people when all things are winding up and things are spinning out of control? You ask Paul the apostle. And Paul faced the dilemma that any godly man who has a heart for God, who weeps between the porch and the altar, he asked the same question, do I come with the rod or do I come in love? Folks, God has called me to start going out soon to preachers.

In fact, next Monday and Tuesday, I'm speaking to 3000 pastors and wives in Springfield, Missouri. I'm not leaving this church. My heart is here and God helping.

I want to live and die here, but I'm going to start going out occasionally to pastors. And I've been on my face for 30 days saying, God, what do you say to pastors at the end of time? What do you say when so many are asleep? What do you say to many now who are into pornography? And what do you say to a nation that's gone pleasure mad? What is the message? Because, see, there's something in the heart. There's something in my nature, at least, that wants to come with the rod and cry out against the sins.

And that's part of the prophetic ministry. And I believe that and I've done that. But you talk to Paul and say, Paul, in just a few years or so, the people you preach to are going to go into the fires of judgment.

Jesus said the armies are coming, coming from the northwest. They're coming tight as arms, going to surround Jerusalem. People are going to starve to death.

Thousands are going to be crucified. The city is going to be burned down in just a few years. In fact, when Paul is talking about his ministry in the last hour of his time, he was speaking just less than 15 years away from all of this happening.

The economy was going to collapse. Jesus had warned, and Paul knew it, of coming sound destruction such that the world had never seen. So, Paul, what is your message to your society that's gone mad? Paul listened to religious leaders who hated Christ.

They called him a devil. We think of how they crucified Christ in our generation, but in Paul's time, they called him a devil. They said Jesus is not coming because all things continue as they were from the foundations of the world.

In fact, even in born-again circles, there was division and strife, and devils posing as angels of light, doctrines of demons, gluttons eating and drinking damnation at the communion table, not discerning the body of Christ. People running for signs and wonders. The zeal for witnessing was gone while people were showing off their gifts in Pentecostal circles.

So, Paul, what are the oracles of God? What do you preach in times like this? If you grieve, if you're here this morning and you grieve over the moral landslide in America from the White House on down to any house, if you weep over the strange ungodly demonic things that are creeping into the house of God, then that's got to be your heart cry, Oh God, what is the message for such a time? In fact, the key to it all is, I found in Acts the 20th chapter, this is in the latter times, the end times of Paul's ministry, he's about to fade out of the picture, and he calls all the elders of Ephesus together, and he confesses from the depths of his heart these words, he said, gentlemen, I go, brethren, I go in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there, but none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my course with joy, and the ministry, now listen to this, the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, and what was it? To testify the gospel of the grace of God, to testify to the whole world of the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, he wanted to understand, he said, I'm not changing my message with the times, it has always been from the beginning to the end, that Jesus Christ died, and he shed his blood to give grace and mercy and longsuffering to sinful mankind, he said, that's been my message from the beginning, and I'm going out that way, I will not change my message, and he proceeds to tell them, the elders, how to feed the church of God, which is purchased with his own blood, and he says to the elders, now, brethren, in other words, as for your ministry to the church of God, as how you're going to feed the flock of the Lord Jesus in the last days, I commend you to God and to the word, and in Greek, that means topic or subject, I recommend that the subject be his grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all them that are sanctified. He said, do you want to be built up in

the last days? Do you want to be sanctified? Hold on to the message of the grace of the living God. Now, Paul, in very perilous times, considered himself an ambassador of reconciliation.

On the eve of judgment, he was preaching, be ye reconciled to God. He said to the church, this is your topic, this is your subject, be ye reconciled to God. Now, then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us.

We pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. Now, the term reconcile is used in the New Testament in Greek, means to bridge a distance between two parties, to bridge a distance. In other words, God is so far from sinful mankind that he cannot be bridged by man alone.

It's impossible for man to close the distance between him and God. There's no amount of good works, there are no promises, nothing he can do can bridge that gap. There's a distance between God and the sinner that had to be bridged.

The term reconcile means to bridge the gap or to close the distance, to close it completely. Paul writes, all things are of God who has reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ. And what he's saying, God, by an act of grace and mercy alone, through no merit of mankind whatsoever, sent his own son, Jesus Christ, to bridge that distance, that Christ came to close the distance, so that those who'd been afar off will be drawn nigh through the blood of Jesus Christ.

This was a message to those afar off, in other words, afar distance from God. Peace to you who are afar off, Ephesians 2.17. Then Paul proceeds to inform us, God has given to us the ministry of reconciliation. We are ambassadors for Christ, beseeching the world to be reconciled to God.

Now listen closely, please. Ambassador means to be a spokesman, a preacher. That we are all ambassadors, Paul said.

Not just to Paul, but to everyone listening to me now, you are an ambassador of reconciliation, the Bible said. Now then, we're all called to be preachers, he's saying, going into all the world with the message that God, by a free act of his mercy, sent Christ to close the distance between himself and the sinner. Christ came down to fallen man because fallen man couldn't get up to him.

And it's God saying, it's God coming to a Laodicean church, for example, a church that's blind and lukewarm and spiritually naked and self-satisfied. And he's not coming with a rod, he's not coming with judgment. He's coming now to knock on the door, to remove the last obstacle of fellowship between himself and his people.

That is the message, he said, that the grace of God, the mercy of God would lead you to repentance. Jesus came preaching repentance this way. He didn't say, repent because hell hangs over your head.

He didn't say, repent because wrath is about to come. He said, repent because the kingdom of God has come. The kingdom of God is his own grace, his mercy, and his love.

He said, that is why one should repent, because I have closed the distance. I'm no further from you now than a heart cry. All you have to do if you're here this morning and you're living in sin, you're on drugs, you're pornography, whatever it is, he's no more than a whisper away.

He has closed the distance. He's not out there, he's right here knocking on the door. Hallelujah.

Blessed be your grace, oh Lord. Every pastor, every evangelist, every lay person has been given a ministry of reconciliation. If you think that's easy, you're mistaken.

Because you and I are mandated to go to a Christ-hating, immoral, pleasure-mad, wholly perverted society. And we're to go to them no matter how we feel, no matter how grieved we are, how they have mocked our Savior, and how incensed you are at the sin, and how grieved you are. You are to go as an ambassador with me in spite of the sin and wickedness and mockery of Jesus Christ to tell them God hasn't abandoned you yet.

And to tell them you're not too forgotten, you're not too separated. The distance has been done away with. Cry out to God.

Folks, that's a message for the White House, for every senator, for every drug addict, for everybody on the face of the earth. No matter what you've done, you're not too far gone. He closed the distance.

Paul said to the preachers, the ambassadors of reconciliation, you first be reconciled to God. In other words, you can't preach to the sinner the message that God has so loved them that he sent his Son to close the distance and to draw nigh unto sinful man with compassion and mercy, to take him out of the kingdom of darkness and bring him right into the kingdom of light. Just a step of faith and a heart cry.

But he's saying, you can't do that. You can't preach reconciliation until you have a full knowledge of what it means and experience it for yourself. Paul goes on to say, you, in other words, you who are called to this ambassadorial ministry, you were at one time alienated in your minds by wicked works.

You had a distance between you and God. The word alienated there is distanced. You were far apart from God.

You're alienated yourself in your mind by wicked works. Now, I want you to know, folks, that you can't understand reconciliation until you understand what he means by wicked works. It's not drugs, it's not alcohol, it's not fornication, it's not adultery.

Wicked works he's talking about are in the house of God. Those wicked works are here this morning, and we're all guilty of them. What God sees as the worst wickedness possible to be indulged in by mankind, and when you see it, it changes your life.

And when you see it, it brings the kind of death that you can say, I have died with Christ the sin. And you can't see that until you understand what Paul the Apostle is saying. You were alienated in your hearts by wicked works at one time.

Now, I believe these wicked works have to do with what Paul calls frustrating the grace of God. Paul said, I do not frustrate the grace of God, for if righteousness comes by the law, then Christ is dead in vain. And to frustrate means to set it aside just to reject it.

Paul said, I don't reject this message. I receive it. My life is based on it.

I do not frustrate the grace of God. My righteousness is his by faith alone. It has nothing to do with my background or my training.

That's all done. It's all passed away. Everything I've learned about how to please God in my own strength and power is nothing but waste.

I put it aside, and that's what I've died to. Jesus offers us acceptance before the Father through his sacrifice, access to the Father, favor and blessing. He offers us forgiveness, his own righteousness.

He offers power over sin to all who believe and accept his offer by faith. He tells me, David, you don't have to struggle in your own power. You don't have to make me any promises.

You can never please me by your good works. They're all filthy rags in my sight. All you need to do is believe that I've accomplished everything in your behalf.

I myself, through my blood, have reconciled you to my Father. I've closed the distance. I've brought you to my Father.

The work is done. Believe it. Now, folks, that's a sacred trust that God will not allow anybody to trample or frustrate or despise.

Despising the grace of God is wickedness. You see, there's something in man that drives him to seek other ways to bridge the distance and bring to God something of his own doing. It's in us.

It keeps popping up in me all the time. It pops up in all of us, especially when we feel God in some area of our life. We want to appease God.

We want to make it up. And what foolish, brazen things we attempt to appease God and try to please him and get back his good favor and to find forgiveness. All our promises of the flesh are human abilities or human willpower.

But these are wicked things in the sight of God. The worst kind of wickedness that is the most hateful to God is we should dare try the impossible to come to him through some heroic struggle against our sin and get a temporary victory to fast and pray and take it to God and present it as our righteousness. That means that our very prayer sometime in our fasting become wickedness because we say, God, I have fasted five days.

I've prayed for hours. You ought to tell me. You have to send revival.

I hear it all over the country. It's though we've merited in some righteousness of our own. It's a stench in God's nostrils.

We don't pray for that purpose. We don't fast for that reason to try to extract from a God who is reticent and doesn't want to give it until he brings us to some place of humility. It's beyond that, folks.

You see, when we have our own little victories that we have wrung out of tweaking our wills and tweaking our own willpower and our own resistance, we keep tweaking it and tweaking it until finally we get a temporary victory. And yet we do. We get on our stilts and we prayed around way up here in our stilts around the church with a judgmental spirit looking down at everybody else who's still in a struggle.

And we boast. Not to anybody else, maybe, but to ourselves. I want a victory.

Bless God, I get it. That's wickedness. Wicked works.

How absolutely foolish for a man to think he can reach God by his own efforts. That's why they built the Tower of Babel. These were sincere people.

These were people who were so convicted by their consciences and so bogged down by their sins. And God, they knew, is so far out there. And they said, well, let's start building.

And they build and build and get higher and said, well, at least we'll go halfway. And surely, if He's a God of mercy, He'll see our struggle. He'll see our sweat and midday, brick by brick, trying to reach Him.

If we go halfway, a merciful God will surely come down and manifest Himself to us. And we're still building the Tower of Babel, step by step, brick by brick, goodwill after goodwill, trying everything in our way to say, oh, God, see my sweat. Oh, God, have mercy on me.

Don't you see? Can I move your heart by my hard efforts to get to you and please you? You think that those mothers who took their babies to the Moloch belly gods with the roaring fire in those still bellies and took their firstborn, you think those mothers didn't love those children? Those mothers wept. Those mothers cried because there was something in their conscience that said, I haven't found God. He's so far from me.

And they had a guilty conscience because of their sins and said, maybe if I give the best thing I have, if I can give the thing that is most precious to me, maybe God will see how desperate I am to please Him. Those were mothers who loved their kids as much as you do. They loved those children.

But there was something, the conscience crying out and rebuking them and condemning them. Oh, God, somehow I have to reach you. They loved those babies.

But they were trying somehow to get access to God who was so far off. I had an experience this past week. In fact, last week I was out on the beach.

One of those few good days we had. I love to walk on the beach after everybody's in bed. There's nobody but me and the Lord and the stars.

And I'll walk for an hour and a half, two hours, just worshiping and praising Him. And it was so clear. And I was looking up at the Milky Way.

And I was working on this message. And I heard a still small voice. Now, please hold steady before you think I've lost my mind.

I was looking at the Milky Way and I heard a voice said, David, jump over it. Jump over it. I said, oh, boy, I've been studying too much.

I started walking. I said, jump it. I said, that's the most foolish, stupid thing I've ever heard.

And the Holy Spirit couldn't speak to me. He said, David, how many, if, you know, you hear that song now, I can fly? We've got a lot of Christians who think they can fly. You know, how many jumps will it take you? How many times are you going to stand there and jump before you realize how stupid and impossible it is to jump the Milky Way? But, you know, we're trying to jump the Milky Way.

We're trying. If I just jump high, I try harder and harder. Take a look some night.

Go out there, out in space and see that Milky Way. I don't know how far it is. You know anybody on the face of the earth, including Michael Jordan, who could jump that Milky Way? And God said, David, that's exactly what I've been trying to show you until you come to the place where you say, I can't jump the Milky

Way.

I can't come to God with anything that's good in myself. That's when you die. I die to any hope of ever pleasing God, of ever coming into his grace or giving him anything of merit or goodness in my own strength.

I die. It's hopeless. And folks, when I think about my good works, I just think about jumping the Milky Way.

I can't do it. Absolutely impossible. And folks, when you come to that place, only then are you driven to the truth that I can come by faith alone, that all my righteousness is his righteousness, that he imputes to me because I simply trust what he did.

I can't get to him, but he came down to me, took on my own flesh and died for my sins. Now he brings me to the Father. He forgives me.

He does it. My part is to trust him. It comes down to all my striving is simply a hopeless effort.

Let me tell you what you have to come to, to this. It's a prayer that says, Oh God, I'm poor. I'm a weak, helpless child.

I'm as unstable as water. This corruption in me is too hard for me. It's over my head.

I don't know what to do with it. My soul's a habitation of dragons. I've made promises and broken them all.

My vows mean nothing. At times I thought I had the victory and I was free and delivered, but it lasted so shortly. I was only deceived.

Without your help, oh Lord, I'm lost. This is the end. Close the distance.

Reconcile me to the Father. And to be reconciled to God is to admit and to live on this truth. That he closed the distance.

That his grace and mercy was given to me. And I'm not going to do despite to that grace. I'm not going to frustrate.

I'm not going to reject it and then turn and try to do it on my own power. I receive by faith, Lord, your righteousness. I know that I fail you at times, but your grace is sufficient.

You said where sin abounds, grace of God much more abounds in our lives. Hallelujah. And then you come finally to this prayer.

If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. So, well, Brother Dave, I'm fighting a lust. I'm fighting a problem.

I've got an addiction in my life. I've got a sin I can't let go and it won't let go of me. What do I do? Bible makes it clear.

When you come to Jesus Christ, you come by faith. You have to believe him now for the forgiveness of sins. Why don't you take another step and believe what he says about the power of the Holy Ghost? That when you come to him and ask for the Holy Ghost, he will give you the Holy Ghost.

The Holy Ghost comes down and abides in you and your body becomes his temple. And when he comes, he doesn't come to be a silent partner. He will make his voice known.

But you have to absolutely believe what God says the Holy Ghost will do. He said, if you through the Spirit do mortify or kill the deeds of the body, he shall live. You don't kill your lust by human effort.

I don't care how hard you try. I don't care how many times you quit smoking. You're going to go right back to it without the power of the Holy Ghost.

I don't care what you try. You're going to have just temporary victories. Now, folks, I, for years, I tried to figure out how the Holy Ghost keeps us.

Because when people come to the altar, I tell them, now, you've given your heart to Jesus. He will empower you. The Holy Ghost will empower you.

Give you the power over sin and lust and the devil. But then I'd go home and say, well, Lord, how do you do that? Holy Ghost, how do you do that? I want you to explain it to me so I can explain it to the people. And you know what God keeps telling me? I'm never going to explain that to you.

All you have to do is believe what the Holy Ghost said he would do. The Holy Ghost said, you turn it over to me and you trust me. I will do it.

He has ways that are beyond our thinking before our capacity to understand. He moves on hearts. He changes events.

He can change whole nations for the sake of the victory of one saint. My part is to say I'm saved by faith. Holy Ghost, come fill my heart.

Empower me. You do it your way. You whisper to me.

You'll say this is wrong. There'll be a voice by saying, go this way. Don't go that way.

He will be there. He will do it. Holy Ghost, I don't have to figure you out.

I'm not the Holy Ghost. I quit trying to figure out the Holy Ghost. I believe what the Bible says.

If you, through the Spirit, do mortify the needs of the body, you shall have life. Life will spring up. Well, I'm done already.

Man, I'm not going to stretch anything out to fill in time. This past month, praying about what to take to preachers. You know the way I am? I'll show you.

My nature. I can't find the scripture, but it's about dumb dogs, blind guides, sleeping watchmen. And so I'm working away in my study on dumb dogs.

I'm going to go out to preachers and talk about dumb dogs. Fast asleep. And I'm going to come down.

I tried and tried and it wouldn't come. I went all through the prophets. And the Holy Ghost came one night and said, David, before you give me this message, I'm going to make you an ambassador of reconciliation.

I said, but God, I want to prophesy against them. I want to see them all on their face. I said, are you forgetting something, David? How merciful I've been to you.

How longsuffering and forbearing. I said, these men are hurting. They're crying.

They need to know they're still loved. Folks, many of you sitting in this auditorium this morning, you're hurting. Nobody can see it.

It's not that you're trying to hide it. It's just that you're not wearing your emotions on your sleeve, so to speak. But you're here this morning and you're in pain and you're suffering.

It could be because of a difficulty in your home or a besetting sin that has been robbing you of your joy in the Lord and brought death to your soul. I speak to those now also in the annex and all the rooms in the annex. There's no distance between us.

No distance at all. The word that I preach has just the same power where you're sitting now is here in this main auditorium. I believe God gave me this message this morning for those that God called here specifically for this time and this place.

And I'm going to give an altar call in just a few moments. For those who are struggling, you've been trying so hard to please God and you just have not been able. And there's kind of a stupor, a spiritual stupor that's come over you.

Folks, I tell you what, the second struggle I've had for 30 days on my face before God fasting and praying. I didn't fast the whole 30 days, but I had some wonderful times in fasting and every day shut in with Him. And the second battle I was having with the Lord was, God, why are there so many loving, wonderful Christians who'll do anything for anybody who won't pray and won't read their Bibles? And they really don't see God.

They're people that are just full of love. They'll do anything for anybody, but you don't see them open their Bibles for days and they don't see God. And in the process, I said, God, why? I have asked people that, I've asked questions wherever I go to people I know that are good people.

In fact, I got some friends together not too long ago and I said, look, I'm your friend. I want to talk to you. I'm not putting you down.

But I said, in all honesty, I want you to help me because I know you and I've not seen you open your Bibles. I've not seen you pray. I've been with some of you and I know your life and I know your families and you're wonderful people, but you're not praying.

You're not seeking God. You're not seeking with all your heart. And I said, would you help me? Because I'm struggling with this.

I don't know. Because every time I get up and preach about it, it doesn't change people. Why? And some of these very things I'm talking, why I am motivated sometimes is come down with a hammer and come with the rod, like Paul said, rather than in love.

I think you can give the rod in love. In fact, often the rod can be the best example of love. But one after another, they shrug their shoulder and said, I don't know.

One said, I don't know how to pray. Another said, well, I'm just condemned. I just don't feel that I've so neglected it that I feel so removed from God.

And that's why there's such a desert in my life and I'm in such a wilderness and I don't have any resources to fight the crisis that come in my life. And if you're here, and this is part of my article, I'm not stretching out my sermon. I'm trying to find people through the leading of the Holy Spirit this morning.

They're in this house listening to me preach right now. And you have to say, Brother Wilkerson, that's me. I think most of you would like to pray.

You would really like. And there's a discipline involved. It has to do with your love for Jesus.

I honestly believe that if you love him and if you're going to come to hear a message of grace and God tells you how much he loves you and how he's closed the distance and done all these things. If you don't come to him and begin to seek him in thanksgiving for that, that's doing despite to his grace. That's frustrating the grace of God.

And folks, I have come to the conclusion that the fear of God boils down to one thing and it has to do with the message I preached this morning. The fear of God in my life is not the fear of judgment or the fear of hell. That's bad in itself.

But the fear of God that I have in me is that God could so reveal his love and his grace and his wonderful glory to me. And that I would be frustrated, I would take it for granted and go on sinning because I believe God was so full of grace and mercy. And we have churches today that do just that all over America.

They're preaching that's that easy grace because it's coming through unclean lips often. And they're not understanding that when God says, I have been gracious and merciful to you. But the same revelation of the glory of God brings with it, but I will not acquit those who are guilty.

And those who are guilty are those who say, thank God for his grace. Thank God I'm saved by faith. And then use that as an excuse for lasciviousness and continue in their sin, their prayerlessness and their neglecting of his word time after time and day after day.

Folks, I know one thing in the past 30 days, if God showed me anything, I want to see a church, this church. Have a revelation of the glory of God in Christ Jesus and all that he supplied in his all sufficiency so that you would have strength and power for the days and the calamities that are coming ahead. I don't want to see just the people laying on the floor and shouting.

The shout should come because you know you're not doing despite to the grace of God. You've accepted it. And you say, and this is my one fear, God, I fear that you should give me such a revelation of who you are.

And I should abuse that. God says, I want to acquit you of that. There's some of you here this morning that have abused the grace of God.

And I'm telling you, there's a discipline involved. And here's what I'm asking you to do. If you're here listening to me now, I'm going to close with this.

If you're if you're in earshot of my message, you see me and you hear me. If you've not been seeking God with all your heart and preparing yourself for the days ahead. If you'll ask God this morning to create a

hunger and thirst in you for his word.

If you ask God to make you a man or woman of prayer, he'll do that. He'll answer that and say, Lord, I'm undisciplined in this. I want you to discipline me.

I want you to help me. God will help you. And then faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God.

And if you want faith to lay hold of what I've been preaching this morning, this marvelous grace of God and reconciliation, then it's going to come through you praying, God, give me a love for this word. And once you have the love for the word and begin to do it, the faith will rise up in you. You'll be able to lay hold of this and nothing that's ever preached from this pulpit again will go over your head.

You will understand it. He'll give you an understanding heart. Will you stand? Holy Spirit.

I want you to give us a revelation of the glory of Christ. The goodness of our God, his long suffering, his mercy to we who are so weak. Oh, God, you close the distance.

You've come down to man. You've been touched with the feelings of our infirmities. And Lord, I am asking you for those that are in this church and those that are hearing me now who've grown a little distant from you, Lord, and alienated by wicked works, trying to please you in their own strength.

Lord, I pray that you bring a death to that this morning. And I pray for those more who've been neglecting you in prayer. They've been neglecting the word of the Lord.

They've been satisfied to hear the preaching in the church, but they've not been alone with you. God, I'm asking you to create a hunger and a thirst in their hearts that they may have a revelation that's their own, something that you gave them, Holy Spirit, because they came to you asking. You said ask and you receive.

Holy Spirit is given to those who ask for him. And I pray, Holy Spirit, you do a marvelous work, Lord, by the power of your word that changes us. In Jesus' name.

Now, here's the invitation. Wherever you're at. In fact, if you're in the annex, the ushers there will show you how to come.

You can come right into the main auditorium from wherever you're at. You that are upstairs, go to the stairs on either side near the main auditorium. Just come down.

Say, Brother Dave, something you said touched me because I've been really wanting to walk close, Lord, but I've neglected that. And folks, that neglect is a terrible thing. That's doing despite to the grace of God.

Don't frustrate his grace. Come say, Lord, forgive me and create a hunger and a thirst in me. If you have sinned, you're a sinner, you're a backslider.

Come with these that are coming right now and say, I'm not leaving this church until I get right with God today. He's no, I told you, he's no further away than a heart cry. All you have to cry is, oh, Jesus, I'm helpless and hopeless on my own.

Folks, will you move in close because there are a lot coming. Move in very close, if you will, please, and make room for these that are coming. In the annex, you can go right out the back doors, and there's a

stairway between the two buildings.

You can come through that stairway. I believe that's open. And if not, you go down right out the way you came in.

Come in the auditorium and come down and stand in the aisles here, if you will, and we'll pray with you and for you. Well, I'm talking, but you that have come, listen to me for just a few moments, please. I want you to know that there has to be something in your heart that says, oh, God, even if I don't see my sin like I should, help me to see it.

Cause the Holy Ghost to show me the exceeding sinfulness of sin. But then, Holy Spirit, remind me of how much Jesus loves me and cares for me in my trial. You that are here because you acknowledge before God that you have neglected his word and time alone with him.

Folks, I don't know how any Christian survives today without being alone with God. He said, when you pray, enter in your closet, that's any secret place, shut the door. I mean, shut people out and pray to the Father in secret, and the Father who sees in secret shall reward you openly.

And that reward is a revelation of his fullness, of his glory and his power to keep you no matter what happens. Give you assurance, and then it produces joy in your heart. You know you can't fight any sin that's in your life, don't you? Will you die to that hope right now? Die to the idea if I can just read enough sermons or hear enough tapes or go to enough conferences, I can get victory.

Or if I have some, the right man lay hands on me and zap this out of me. Never gonna happen. Never.

Has to be a step of faith that you take now. Look at me, please. God means what he says.

He doesn't speak into the wind. He speaks into the heart. And it's your part and my part.

You say, what's my part? Does God do it all? He responds to faith. Your part and my part is to believe what he said is true and act on it. He said, confess your sins with your mouth and believe with your heart.

You shall be forgiven. That's God's Word. He said, if you seek me with all your heart, you'll find me.

You'll find me. I remind God of that every time I go to prayer. I said, oh God, you told me if I would seek you with all my heart, I would find you.

And what does it mean to find God? It means to find him all sufficient with everything I need. I want you to pray this prayer with me wherever you're at. Pray it right out of your heart.

Jesus, I need you. I don't know how to pray as I should. I don't know how to live for you.

I can't do it in my own power. Oh Jesus, help me to die of any hope of pleasing you or getting my sins forgiven by anything I can do in my human strength. I die to that.

I die with Christ right now. And I turn to you, Father, in simple faith. Say, I believe you, Jesus, what you did at the cross.

You took my sins. You took all that was on me. And you wiped my slate clean.

Now I can come to my Father and be accepted because I'm in Christ. By faith. Now, Holy Spirit, come and fill me.

Give me power. Power over sin. Power over temptation.

Power over lust. Holy Spirit, do it any way you please. But I believe you'll do it.

I trust you. Now, by faith, I am forgiven. I'm accepted by my Father.

My hands are clean. My heart is right. I have an inheritance of eternal life through my faith in Christ Jesus.

Holy Spirit, I believe you're living in me now. Now do your work in me. Start right now to convict me, guide me, lead me, and comfort me.

Now just raise your hands and give him thanks from your heart and your own words, Lord. I give you thanks. I give you praise.

You are worthy, Lord. We give you thanks. We don't have to scream at you, Lord.

We don't have to make a scene to impress you. All you're asking is our faith, our childlike faith. Hallelujah.

And, Lord, you said this grace leads us into holiness and into righteousness. Hallelujah. That we may be acceptable before you through the blood of Christ.

Pray this further prayer with me. Lord Jesus, I ask you now to put in my heart a hunger for the Word of God. Help me, Lord Jesus, to learn to pray.

Call me to prayer. Woo me to prayer. Bring me to prayer.

Now, listen, I want you to believe that now. I want you to pray that every day. When you get up in the morning, Lord, today, and get your Bible out and say, Lord Jesus, speak.

Folks, please, start reading the Psalms if you have. Just read five chapters in the Psalms and say, Lord, today as I read these five chapters, speak to my heart. He'll never fail to speak to you.

And then go in to read the Gospel of John. Don't go to Revelation right away till you get enough love and practice in the Word of God. Hallelujah.

Now, Lord, go with these, your dear repentant ones. Lord, show us your great love whereby you've loved us. Then you go on to say, Lord, by this all men love, know you're my disciples.

If you have love one for another. Here's what I'd like you to do all through the body of Christ. Up over in the annex rooms, we've got video screens everywhere trying to accommodate the hungry seekers that come to this church.

Women hug women and men hug men. No mixing, please. Turn around.

Love somebody. Sister, brother, we're watching you. Say, God love you.

God love you. God bless you. This is the conclusion of the tape.

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