

Experiencing God's Holiness

by Francis Chan

Francis Chan challenges listeners to experience God's holiness by reading and obeying His Word, seeking His truth, and living a life of sacrifice and serving others.

Duration: 58:38

Scripture: Isaiah 6:8, Amos 7:14

Topics: "Spiritual Revival", "Holy Boldness"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of maintaining boldness in speaking God's truth, even when faced with opposition or distractions. It highlights the need to return to a deep love and intimacy with Jesus, prioritizing spiritual connection over worldly distractions. The speaker shares personal reflections on losing some of that boldness and love, encouraging the audience to strengthen what remains and is about to die, echoing the message from Revelation 3.

Transcript

This gentleman over here to my right, your left, is Francis Chan. And let me tell you a couple of things about him. He is the founding pastor and the teaching pastor at the Cornerstone Community Church in Simi Valley, California.

He's here with his wife, Lisa. They have five children. Francis was born in San Francisco, but at a very, very young age was in Hong Kong.

And then as a youngster came back to the United States, he's the author of numerous books, and he's also a very sought-after speaker. FCCI is very privileged to have with us this morning Pastor Francis Chan. Just during our time this morning, I've just been praying.

I'm praying that, just even right now, I'm saying, God, can we please experience something that remotely resembles what I read about in here? You know, I don't want an ordinary meeting, an ordinary gathering. I don't want an ordinary life. I pray often, God, I don't want to do something that an unbeliever could do.

I don't want my life to look like, gosh, anyone could have done that. You didn't need the Holy Spirit to do that. We didn't really experience Him.

And I just go, God, I don't want this day to be like that. There should be such a marked difference in me because the Spirit of Him who raised Christ from the dead is actually inside of here. He's inside of you,

and there should be something different.

Man. And so, I look at that early church, and I thought they would pray, and everything would start shaking, and they would walk out with this new courage, this new power. That early church was this unstoppable force.

It was unique. Unbelievers would look in and go, what is that? The disciples said, you could have that too. Repent, be baptized, you'll be filled with that same Spirit.

You, your kids, those who are far off, those who are sitting in a conference room 2,000 years later, it's a promise to them. And I'm praying for you that you live that type of life where at the end, everyone just goes, there's no way he or she could have pulled that off. It's impossible.

It doesn't make sense. Outside of some other power, the Holy Spirit Himself changing your life, and so I'm praying that for you. I'm praying that for your life.

This morning, I was praying for you when I was reading. I got up, and our church is reading through the book of Jeremiah. And I was reading in chapter 14 this morning-ish.

In 14, it is 14. Gosh, I didn't bring my glasses. Verse 13, where he says, what are these, are they really strong? Oh, thank you, wow, this is perfect.

Got stuff all over them, but. Okay, where he says, then I said, ah, Lord, behold, the prophets say to them, oh no, that's not what I want, okay. Verse 14, the Lord said to me, the prophets are prophesying lies in my name.

I didn't send them, I didn't command them, or speak to them. They're prophesying to you a lying vision, worthless divination, and the deceit of their own minds. He says, you know, these prophets that you're listening to, they're telling you lies.

He goes, they're just making stuff up. I go, I didn't send them. They just say things.

It reminded me of, in 1 Kings 22, when King Jehoshaphat, or when Jehoshaphat says to the king of Israel, he goes, you know, inquire for me, inquire of the Lord, and so they gather 400 prophets, and say, should we go to battle? And all 400, imagine, this whole room, if you guys were all the prophets in the land, they gather every one of you together, and they all say the same thing. These are the prophets, and they all say, yes, go to war, you're gonna win. All of them.

He says, is there anyone else? And the answer is, well, there's that one guy, Micaiah. There's that one man, but I hate him, it says. He never prophesies good concerning me.

He goes, you know, let's just listen to these 400, but there's that one guy, let's just not even listen to him, and sure enough, he tells them the truth. But it's a crazy passage if you read it sometime, because in chapter 22, in verse 19, Micaiah says, hear the word of the Lord. I saw the Lord sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven, listen, this is so weird, think about this, all the host of heaven standing beside him on his right hand and on his left, and the Lord said, who will entice Ahab that he may go up and follow Ramoth Gilead? And one said one thing, and another said another, then a spirit came forward, stood before the Lord, saying, I'll entice him.

And the Lord said to him, by what means? And he says, I'll go out and will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all of his prophets. And he says, you are to entice him, and you shall succeed. Go out and do so.

Now therefore, behold, the Lord has put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these, your prophets. The Lord has declared disaster for you. Is that the most bizarre story? So God's going, I gotta entice this guy, and what am I gonna do? And one spirit says, I know what I'll do.

I'll get the prophets to lie. I'll go down there and entice them to lie, and God goes, good plan, go, go do that. And you're gonna succeed.

And so here's these 400 prophets. They're going, oh yeah, yeah, go to war. This'll work, this'll work, this'll work.

See, I read these passages in the Bible, and again, I wish I could just, part of me wants to stand here and just say, would you please read this book? That's all I want you to do is just read this book, get alone, read this book as much as you can, cover to cover, over and over and over, and listen to these voices, and the reason is is because people could be lying to you. We all know people lie, right? I mean, how many times have you just been blown away by the way people have lied to you? Just straight to your face in times that you have lied to others and deceived other people. And I was praying for you specifically because I think people lie to you more than the normal person.

I even think, just hear me on this one, for some of you, my concern is that maybe even pastors might lie to you specifically. Here's why I say this. I was a pastor for 18 years, no, not 18, was it 17 years, and you try not to show favoritism, because the Bible's so against it, but sometimes it's hard, and sometimes someone walks in and you know who they are.

Maybe in Southern California, an actress would walk in, and it's like, wow, suddenly there's a calm in the room. You're like, wow, and all this whispering, murmuring. Even every one time my wife and I were gone somewhere and I get a text, Pamela Anderson's at church today.

My wife's like, why are they telling you that? It's just like this weird, oh, this athlete was here, this athlete was here, there was just like this, no way, what an honor, they're in our church. I mean, any time someone of, whether they were rich or famous came in, and there was a tendency. Man, this happened ever since I was a youth pastor.

Man, as a youth pastor, you wanted to get that head cheerleader in there. You wanted to get the quarterback of the football team, because that's gonna draw everyone else, and so when they show up, it's like, yeah, oh man, it's so good to have you here. And there is just a, I am not saying, please don't get me wrong, I am not saying it's happening in your church and it's happening to you.

I'm just saying it could. And there's a tendency that way, and when I go to pastor's conferences, I hear a lot of so-and-so goes to my church. This guy in my church owns this business.

You know, and there's just this, man, I'm just so happy that you're here that I'm not gonna confront you on anything. I'm gonna treat you special. And so you're, ah, it's okay.

You know, it's just, there's a, come on, you know we get special treatment in different places, and I get concerned about that. I get concerned in my own life when people treat me so well, and they just go, oh, you're this, you're that, and that's why I go, man, read this book. You gotta read it, you gotta cling to it,

because I think people will tell us things that we want to hear sometimes.

Paul tells Timothy, in the end days, that's what they're gonna do. They're just gonna tell you what your ears wanna hear, and people are gonna go to those places, because we like hearing the positive about ourselves. And I've had to just cling to this book and go, God, what's really true? What's really in this book? I wanna be right before you at the end.

On Sunday, I told you about how I try, I'm a pretty simple person, very, I like the obvious. I don't like to miss the obvious. And so when I read this book, and something in my life doesn't make sense, I go, gosh, according to this book, there should be a lot more power in my, I'll just start praying for it.

I go, God, it's gotta be there. I gotta have what I see in here. God, right now, I don't want it to be flesh and blood, just trying to communicate the flesh and blood.

You're saying something spiritual could happen through your word right now, through my spirit, to your spirit, because of the Holy Spirit. Something real could happen where you leave and change. So when I see something, I go, God, I gotta have that.

I must have that. And so in my own life, there have been times when I've just read the word and been so convicted, and go, okay, that has to change. I remember my first trip to Africa.

My first trip to Africa, I didn't go with the right motives. I went because someone invited me to a special trip to Uganda with just these mega-church pastors as early in my ministry. They told me Franklin Graham was leading it, and they told me that even Bono might be going.

I go, no way, I'm there, you know? And so it's all arrogance. It's all just, you know, selfishness, like, oh, I'll go to Africa. Oh, yeah, yeah, sure, I care about the poor.

And so I go, and Franklin Graham didn't come because his mom got sick, and Bono certainly wasn't there. I just ended up in Africa with a bunch of no-names. But when I got there, man, I told you, favoritism, right? I got there, and my heart just started breaking.

I started seeing these little kids digging through the trash, right? Digging through, like, these just dumps, like little kids. And we had two little girls, and all of the scriptures, the scriptures came to life, you know, about loving your neighbor as yourself. And I just couldn't even get my mind around, okay, if I love those kids like myself, or if those were my kids, man, and I adored my, I mean, I still adore them, but I, you know, back then, you know when they're little, they're always cuter, but I just, you know, looking, and I'm thinking about my two little girls, and I thought, what if that was Rachel and Mercy, right there, digging through the trash? And the Bible says, love your neighbor as yourself.

What would I want someone to do for my little girls? If that was me in Africa, and some rich American comes over, and not that I was making much money back then, but we're rich, and what would I want him to do for me? And all these thoughts, I mean, that we didn't really talk about in church back in the day. I think there's been a move, I think there's been a change in the last 10 years, but back then, there just wasn't a whole lot. I was the guy, if you saw Starving, if I saw Starving people on television, remember they used to do those commercials, and I just flipped the channel, because I didn't want to see that.

But everything changed, you know? I just was crying as I saw where these kids lived, and everything else, and I came home, and I was a wreck, I just looked at my wife, and I'm looking at our house, and I'm going,

gosh, this doesn't make sense. Why is my life so much more important than theirs? I mean, is my soul really that much more important than theirs? And I was wrestling with this stuff, and I'm going, gosh, I can't handle this anymore. I know we don't talk about this in church, but it seems like it's on almost every page of the Bible.

And I just looked at my wife, and said, honey, I'm really struggling with even the house we're living in right now. I mean, it wasn't anything major, it was like 2,000 square feet, normal house, but I go, from what I saw, I said, but I don't want to do anything until you go. I want you to see it.

And my wife just saying, you know, I love this house, but I trust you. I don't have to go. If you think that God wants us to sell, and look at something else, then let's do it.

And it's like, really? That afternoon, started driving around trailer parks, and looking at trailer parks, and going, because our little sacrifice could build a school for them, it could build a medical clinic for them. I went to the church, I started telling them, I go, this is crazy, the way they're living, let's start giving, let's start serving. You know, we looked at this building project we had.

We had a \$20 million building project that we were gonna enter into, and I'm going, man, why do we need a \$20 million building project? Man, we're in Southern California, why don't we just sit outside? Seriously. And I looked at the church. I go, how awesome would that be, if everyone's driving down the road, and they see 4,000 people sitting in the grass? Because they're going, look, we can go back to our houses.

There are people that are starving to death, people with no clean water. Isn't that a better picture of Jesus? And so, wouldn't it be awesome if it was raining, and they see people in the rain going, man, big deal, I get back in my car, and I drive off and dry off, and get back into my comfortable house. Isn't that a better picture of Christ to the community? We lost a bunch of people, but there was a crowd in the church going, yeah, I wanna sit in the rain.

I'm tired of this comfortable life. Yeah, let's do this thing. Let's build this outdoor amphitheater.

Forget the building we were gonna build. Let's build something for children's hunger fund on that property instead, and we'll sit on the grass. Oh, right on.

Let's do that. I look at the elders. I go, you know what? Love your neighbor as yourself.

Why don't we change our whole budget? If we love our neighbor as ourself, let's spend on our neighbor what we spend on ourselves. What do you guys think? How about if we give away half of everything that comes in from now on? And all the elders are like, let's do it. I'm like, killer elder board.

They're going, you know what? That's right, but if we say we're gonna do this, let's just do it. I'm like, all right, let's go. And so we made commitments like, okay, we're gonna give children's hunger fund a million dollars this year.

We're gonna give you X amount. I mean, it's hard to spend millions of dollars just like that and go, man, where's the best place to do it? And I remember giving, saying, okay, we'll give you every three months, we'll write you a check for 250,000. And I just remember the week, the second week, because it was the summer months, and I'm going, oh no, there's nothing in the bank.

We opened our mouths. And I didn't even tell the church. I knew it though.

It was that September payment, September 1st payment. I'm going, man, it's been a terrible summer. I don't know how we're gonna come up with \$250,000.

I'm looking in the bank. Only me and the finance department know about this. Honestly, no one in the church knows about it.

They just think everything's going fine. And I was like, God, you've always come through for me. Come on, God, what did we do wrong? What did we do wrong? We're supposed to write a check next week.

Monday morning comes around. My two leaders of the finance department come in. They go, Francis, you're never gonna believe this.

No announcement, no one knew anything was due. They just handed me a piece of paper. They go, look at the offering on Sunday.

\$251,000. I mean, you gotta understand, that was so weird. If you look back at the cornerstone finances, it's like 80, 90, 100, 80, 90, 80, 80, 80, 251, 80, two.

I'm serious. Man, I just, I told, I go, I looked at the paper. I go, do you guys mind leaving just for a second? Because I just wanted them out of the room.

And I just started bawling in my office. I just started crying, and I didn't want anyone to see me. I'm just, oh God, this is so awesome.

This is the way I wanna live, where just these crazy things happen that don't make any sense because we're on the right track. And to have a church like that, and to know in the next week I can announce them. I go, none of you knew this, but we needed 250 grand last week.

And I didn't tell you, we got 251,000. We were able to write our check. My wife and I had a great dinner.

You know, it's just, it was just one of those like, thank you, Lord. See, I live for those moments. I don't know about you, but I live for those moments where I just go, God, this is so cool, God.

This is how I wanna live, where it just doesn't make sense. It makes sense according to this book, but nothing else. I want these changes.

I want these changes in the church. The church grew, and I'm gonna share this here because I think you guys could understand this. I was looking at the church, and I'm going, okay, a lot of things are great.

Things are still happening. Praise God, I love these people. But some things in my head, the numbers weren't adding up.

Because the business side of me was saying, wait a second, when I had 20 people in my church, and we grew to 200, I go, that's awesome. You know, I've got 20 people. You give me a sales force of 20 people, and they each made 10 sales that year, and we're up to 200, awesome.

Okay, and then the church still made sense when we had 200 people. I was given, that's a big responsibility, Lord. You gave me 200 salespeople, and then we grew to 2,000.

I'm going, that's pretty darn good, right? Then I grew 2,000 salespeople, and that sales force, which got a lot more expensive, now we've got 4,000. I was like, okay, that's not as good, but you know, okay, one

sale per person. But then when we had 4,000 people, and it costs a fortune to keep 4,000 people going, and the next year, we had maybe 4,100.

Now I'm saying, I've got a sales force of 4,000, and we're producing 100 sales. And right then, everyone's pursuing me, going, wow, that's success. Look at that room, it's filled every week, and will you speak here? Will you speak here? Will you write a book? Will you do this? And in my head, the math, I'm going, wait a second, this isn't making sense.

It was good when it was small, and it was multiplying, and everyone was doing something, and sharing their faith with someone, but now that we're packed out, this whole scene just isn't totally making sense to me. The numbers aren't matching up, because now I've got a giant army, and I'm looking at the results. Sure, they're still giving, and it can look good on paper, but in my heart, I'm going, man, I'm accountable for a workforce of 4,000, and I can't figure out how to mobilize them all.

4,000 people filled with the Holy Spirit of God, and how can I release these people, and go do what the church is supposed to do, and what we're all created to do? And so what ends up happening is a lot of people sit around, and I, looking back, I go, gosh, I couldn't get my mind around it. It drove me crazy, because I knew there was wasted resource in the church, and I would look back at the early church planting movements. The Reformation, the first real church planting group really were the Anabaptists, because the Reformation, the Reformers, they weren't trying to plant new churches.

They were just reforming the old one, but then came the Anabaptists, and what was amazing about them, when they went to plant a church, you know who they took? They would send people out in threes, and it was not senior pastor, youth pastor, worship pastor. Okay, that's what I would do. You know, I'm thinking, okay, I would need a guy that can sing, you know, lead a few songs.

I need someone to just take care of the kids, get them out of my face so I can preach, right? And then I'm good, I'm good, and get me a bill. That's not how they, you know, they sent people out in threes. Here's who they sent.

They would send out a teaching pastor, someone who knew how to teach the word of God and handle the word of God and hold the doctrinal purity. The second guy they would send, they would send him out to find the poorest of the poor, the biggest needs in that area, so the church could minister to them. And the third person they would send is a businessman to fund the whole thing and take care of the pastor.

Doesn't that sound fun to you? Seriously, think about it. What if I told you, hey, we're gonna go to such and such a city, I'm just gonna charge it, I got a buddy, he's gonna go to all the poorest of the poor. You gotta start up a business, though.

You gotta make some, I can't even think about that. For starters right now, okay, God is gonna use your gift in this. I mean, there was just this, I was reading about it, I'm going, man, we don't think that way.

And then I talked to businessmen that go, man, I would jump in with you, let's go, let's just try something. And let's just create something out there and let's believe God to use us for this church. And I'm just thinking in the church how many people sit around and don't do a lot and I go, man, that's gotta change.

And that's kind of the mode that I've been in. And actually, I've decided for my seminar breakout, that's what I wanna talk about. I was gonna do a thing on the presence of God and if you're really heartbroken about that, I'll send you an old talk about it.

I just think there's an opportunity here and I didn't wanna miss it. So for those of you who were gonna come, I switched it. So I went to San Francisco, I left the church, I thought, you know what, I'm gonna go to China, I'm gonna, maybe I just don't fit in here in America.

Let's go to China, I hear about the church, the underground church over there. And I went over there and went to this, our whole family, we sold everything in Southern California and we said, it's time to move on. For 17 years of this church, we had good elders in place, this city has heard everything I've got to say.

It was just clear to my wife and I that it was time for a new adventure. And she says, well, if you know we don't belong here, why don't we just sell our house and then just go? Just wherever God has us land, we know it's not here, so why keep anything here? I was like, wow, you're the one that's pregnant with our fifth kid. If you say so, let's go, you know? I mean, that's crazy.

I have a crazy wife, you know, that's just going, yeah, let's do this, if we know it's the Lord, this is nothing compared to what they did in scripture. And people go, well, that's crazy. I go, man, are you kidding me? Have you read this book? You see, I wanna one day fit in, I wanna fit in in this book.

I go, this is not crazy, you don't read about, oh, Peter and John are flogged, and this guy's rising from the dead, and oh man, look at Paul, he was a shipwrecked, and this and this, oh no, you know what's crazy? Look right here, there's this guy named Francis, this is a Chinese guy who went to China. No way. Now there's some faith right there, there's some faith.

Okay, let's put him in Hebrews 11. You know, we just get so, we get so unbiblical in our thinking that the tiniest sacrifice we lift up like, wow, that's crazy. You know, even after I wrote my first book, I'm not a writer, I didn't know how to write.

Suddenly this thing, they said it's gonna sell a lot, and suddenly we hear these rumors like, it looks like you're gonna, you may make a couple million dollars off this. I'm like, what? Million? And just thinking in my head and talking to my wife and going, well, what am I gonna do with a million dollars? We're gonna buy stuff we don't need, and stuff we're gonna regret. Let's sign it over right now, let's sign all the royalties over, you know, into a gift fund, and then we can just give it away, but we can't touch it, because when we get there, I don't wanna look back and go, wow, we just blew all that money on stuff that didn't matter.

I wanna know that it counted for something. And that just became our habit. It's like, let's just sign over the royalties because I don't wanna touch it.

You know, I love what Randy Alcorn says. It's like, you're like the UPS or the FedEx guy. You don't just get to take every package, you know, and open it up and go, oh, I want this one, you know? Your job, when God gives you a package, is going, okay, who does this go to? This isn't all my stuff just because it came to me.

I'm just a UPS guy. I'm like, whoo-hoo, kids, look what we got, a whole truckload. It's just, no.

You're given that to distribute. And so we just started doing, and it was crazy what the church would say. Wait, didn't you save some for your family? I mean, what if there's an emergency? What if there's an emergency and I'd say, so are you telling me that what's happening in Thailand is not an emergency? What's happening in Ethiopia is not an emergency? What's happening in Indonesia is not an emergency? What's happening in Haiti is not an emergency? Oh, it's only an emergency if it affects me and my little children.

You got that from the Bible? Man, there's people dying right now. It's just, and this isn't like a guilt, it's just like a joy. Man, do you know how good it is? Do you ever put shoes on an orphan that never had shoes? I remember my wife, when she finally did go to Africa, you know, the next year, she just, she, you know, I was teaching a pastor's conference because that's my gift.

And so my wife took us some kids shopping because that's her gift. And when she came back, you know, she was just, she was in tears. She was just talking about these kids and their feet just protruding out of these shoes that they've had for years.

And she goes, when I went down and just put the shoe on this kid and just the tears of joy, like I'd never seen her so beautiful, just so excited. I mean, this isn't like, oh, go do this because, you know, you're this rich American and you're wasting. No, it's like, man, this is life.

Do you know how excited our church was when we started giving everything away? Well, you should have seen the energy in that room. I go, man, we just dug like 10 more wells. Yeah, the place was just nuts.

And people go, man, I sure hope this amphitheater thing works out, you know, because I want to sit in the rain. I would be, it was a joy to think we could sacrifice for the sake of our brothers. Our county ended up shutting it down and said we couldn't do what we wanted to do.

County of Ventura, I'm not bitter. But, because I thought this is gonna be awesome. This is gonna be amazing, you know? But there's just, we think of different ways.

That's the way God's wired some of us. Let's just figure this out. This is all for the joy and with the church.

Anyways, I don't know how much time I have and I totally deviated. 9.56, what time am I supposed to be done? Okay, let me just, okay, so I went to San Francisco. I went to China, ah, okay, let me go back.

Okay, when we were in China, I went to, oh, that's where I left off. I talked about the underground church. We were gonna go to the underground church.

And there was a secret meeting. And so I just took my oldest daughter. I didn't take everyone else.

Just my oldest daughter, because it's a little dangerous and she was the most expendable. And so we go and we're talking to these guys, right? I wish you could, I wish I could just show you a video of it. I wish, but these young people, the passion on their faces, just giving testimony.

Right when we walked in and the way they prayed and they're crying and they're screaming out to God. They were going, God, send us somewhere dangerous. Send us to the worst places, God, we want to, you know? And they let me do like a Q&A with them.

And I go, well, I wanna ask you guys questions, you know? I said, you tell me, tell me about the persecution. They would tell stories. I mean, it wasn't what I expected, that joy you were talking about, that joy of just, man, what God does in your life.

They were telling me stories about when the police came and they're hiding and all of them had stories to share. And I'm just at the edge of my seat. You know, there's one girl that's going, oh, I was just crammed in between these two boards forever.

I was trying not to even breathe very loud. I'm just so softly because a car was walking right by me. And another one's going, yeah, this money started shooting, just shooting in the air as we were running away.

But we were always taught, just keep running, you know? Don't stop, don't stop. And they're telling me about all of this stuff. But it was with, they're all laughing.

They're just with this joy of, man, this is normal. And then they asked me, they go, why are you so fascinated by this? And I told them, I go, that's not how we do it in America. I go, we have buildings called churches, okay? And people go to these buildings on Sunday morning.

And depending on who's speaking, that's which building they go to. You know, if there's a better speaker here, people will gravitate towards there. People leave, you know, if the band is better there and they like the music style, or if the kids program comes up, you know, with the puppets here, it's just different.

And if two people get in an argument, one will just go to a church down the street and this and that. And the response was crazy. In fact, my daughter afterwards looked at me and goes, Dad, can you believe that? They were laughing, like hysterically.

I mean, not just ha ha ha ha. I mean, it was like they were grabbing. And honestly, I wasn't trying to be funny.

Because that's why my daughter's like, Dad, you weren't even being funny. I go, I know. I was just making some statements about the church.

But to them, it was so comical because they thought, how in the world did you get that? Seriously. And I walked away going, you guys are right. It's a bit comical how consumer-driven we've gotten.

It's to the point where they were dumbfounded. And, you know, sometimes we hear stories like, oh, that's so weird over there in China. You know, and then to go to India and do a conference for the persecuted church.

And go, gosh, it's so weird, that little group of people over there. Then you realize, okay, China's at, what, 1.4 billion? India's at 1.2 billion? America's at, what, 280 million? And so the majority of the church is looking at the way we do things and going, are you kidding me? And I just felt this calling of, no, let's change this. I really believed it.

I thought I was gonna stay there, and God was saying, no, you didn't finish your work in America. You go back there. I want my church to be beautiful.

I wanna see a group of people that aren't lukewarm, just jumping from here to there, throwing a couple bucks in the plate, and trying not to swear too much. I wanna see this, you know, where they're in this world and going, I can have that power right now. I want it, God.

I want the supernatural through me. I wanna get the shirt off my back. I wanna serve you and experience you truly.

And when I came back, I went to San Francisco. Just, I don't know why. It just, and then my brother had a one-bedroom apartment, and our family didn't know where to live.

And so literally, that's what took us there. And then once we got there and saw just the darkness, and then went to some impoverished areas over there, and the projects, we said, you know, let's just go. Let's go, let's just see what we can do.

I've worked with the rich for so long, and I wanna work with the poor for a little bit, because it's a different message. With the rich, it's always, man, humble yourself. You're not that great.

Go on, quit thinking you're so wonderful. You know, God's much bigger than you. But with the poor, a lot of times it's like, no, you're not a loser.

That's not what everyone says about you. In fact, God would choose you. You could be the leader.

And all these, and some great things happened, but I assumed revival. I thought, man, okay, if it's hard for the rich to enter the kingdom of heaven, and God chooses the poor and the lowly, then I'm gonna go to the poor and lowly, and we're gonna see revival. I didn't see it.

Saw a lot of rejection amongst the poor in America. It got to where it was confusing, you know, because I'm going, what? I'm used to seeing a lot of stuff happening. What's going on here? Started looking at my own life.

Is there sin? I'm evaluating, going, not more than usual. It's just, I'm going, God, I'm looking, I'm confessing whatever. I said, do I not have faith? And I go, no, I believe in great things more than ever.

I seriously got to the point where I started looking at my team and going, one of you's in sin. Because this doesn't happen to me, man. There's just been fruit, you know.

It's me, Francis, crazy love. You know, it's just, where is it? It's not happening. And it's been the season where the Lord's been teaching me a ton.

Show me one that, we're dead in our trespasses and sins. We're dead, we're literally dead. And so whether you're rich in dead or poor in dead, it's still gonna take a miracle for the Holy Spirit to open your eyes to the truth.

And maybe I just assumed the poor would just accept it. But the other thing I realized, and this was my real point this morning, was you and I, God wants it to be an honor for us to speak his truth, even if it's rejected. And that was something I had to learn.

In fact, one of my favorite passages that I've been preaching for 15 years is Isaiah 6. I just love that scene, because in Isaiah 6, a man sees God. And growing up in the church, no one ever described God to me. But what I noticed was, I never really read to the end of the, I mean, I read it, but I never really studied it, I never preached it.

And I was reading it the other day, you know, I was preaching, and I'll go preach Isaiah 6. And I kept reading, going, wow, I never really thought about that. See, I got lost in that first part. In Isaiah 6, you know, Isaiah says, in the year the king Uzziah died, I saw the Lord, and he's sitting on his throne.

And he's high and exalted, the train of his robe fills the temple, and there's high angels. He says that the seraphim had six wings, with two they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, with two they're flying and they're screaming, holy, holy, holy. And it's so loud, he says that everything started shaking, and the whole place was filled with smoke.

And so, usually, when I first studied that, I'm going, no way, no one ever told me that. So if I saw God right now, it'd be like walking in this room, and seeing a being on this giant throne, to where his robe fills up the whole thing, and that there'd be these angels that are screaming out how holy he is, and everything would be shaking. Like, if I had to approach that God, what would I feel? And I just got lost in that, because I'm going, man, I don't pray like that.

I don't think about who I'm talking to when I pray. And so it changed my prayer life. I started just thinking about that scene, and just picturing myself getting on my knees, and going, God, I can't believe I'm even in your presence, only because of Jesus that I even come here.

This is intense. I'm talking to you? I mean, I picture him on his throne with his angels, covering themselves up. I'm sorry, I treat you so casually.

Sometimes I've just said words to you, and I didn't even think about who I was approaching. Had a big impact on me. Sometimes I would read on, and talk about Isaiah's response to God.

And Isaiah, you know, when he saw God, he just says, woe is me, I'm ruined. I'm a man of unclean lips. I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have just seen, I've just seen God, the King, the Lord of hosts.

Isaiah, sometimes I get stuck there, because I think, when I see God, what am I gonna think of? I'm gonna think about all the dirt in my life. When you're before someone so holy. I mean, we do this with people.

Aren't there certain people that are so godly that you almost feel weird walking with them? Like you're convicted by their godliness. That's happened in my life where I go, gosh, I feel guilty just hanging out with you. And I just try to imagine, what's it gonna be like when I see God? Like, just like, oh.

And that's what I say. Sometimes I get there. And then sometimes I go even further, where, you know, when God sees that, the response is, he sends one of the angels to come and touch Isaiah's lips.

He goes, look, your lips have been cleaned. Your sin's atoned for, everything's good. Someone took it for you, someone atoned.

And I talk about the grace of God that, Isaiah did nothing. He just humbled himself, said, okay, God, here's all the junk. That's why I loved Ann's book, Ann's message last night, where she just said, okay, look, I was trying to hide this and that.

Here's who I am, here's what I did. Some moments, like, here's all of my sin, God. And God says, now, let me forgive you.

You humbled yourself before me, and your sin's been atoned for. Isaiah did nothing to deserve that. God just did it all.

That's his grace. And I talk about that. And some of us get to verse eight, where then God says, okay, I need someone.

I need someone. And Isaiah says, what? Here am I, send me. That's a great verse, right? Because Isaiah's thinking, I should have been dead.

You should have killed me. And you didn't. You forgave me.

So what do you want? I'll go, I'll do whatever you want. And that's that great missions verse, and we all leave the church going, yeah, here am I, send me. And that's awesome.

But I never really studied the next thing that God says. This is what I want to leave you with, is in Isaiah six, verse nine, I'm trying to find the glasses. He said, go, say to this people, keep on hearing, but don't understand.

Keep on seeing, but do not perceive. Make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy, and blind their eyes. Lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed.

Then I said, how long, Lord? And he says, until cities lie waste without inhabitant, and houses without people, and the land is a desolate waste, and the Lord removes people far away, and the forsaken places are many in the midst of the land. And though a tenth remain in it, it'll be burned again. Like a terebinth or an oak whose stump remains, when it is felled, the holy seed is its stump.

You see what God said to Isaiah? Isaiah said, okay, I'll go, I'll go, I'll go. God says, go. Tell these people, you're gonna keep on hearing, but you're never gonna get it.

You're never gonna get it. He goes, in fact, Isaiah, you're just gonna keep talking, talking, talking, to the point where their ears get dull, their eyes get heavy. They're gonna fall asleep in your messages.

And Isaiah's answer is, how long? And God says, until everyone's gone. There might even be a tenth left for a while, and I'll just burn it up. Until they're all out of here.

That was Isaiah's mission. And what I learned was, God doesn't promise revival. In fact, sometimes he promises the exact opposite.

I'm reading Jeremiah, and it starts off by saying, look, everyone's gonna hate you, Jeremiah. That doesn't sound like revival to me. And I was thinking I was doing something wrong because I wasn't seeing revival.

But Jesus says, look, if they hate you, keep in mind, they hated me first. John 15, 26, servants not better than his master, they persecuted me. What do you think they're gonna do to you? Paul tells Timothy, in the latter times, people aren't gonna put up with sound doctrine.

But wanting their ears tickled, they're gonna find teachers that will tell them what their itching ears wanna hear. That doesn't sound like revival. It could happen, it does happen in some areas, but what the Lord was showing me was, man, Francis, you gotta be excited to preach my word just because it's my word.

And it could be revival, might not be revival, but it's an honor just to preach his word. And it was cool because we're reading through Amos that week too, and in Amos, I love this. There's this time when Amos is preaching judgment against Israel, right? And it's just judgment, judgment, judgment.

So finally, someone gets in his face, this guy named Amaziah, and Amaziah, verse 12, says to Amos, O seer, go, flee to the land of Judah. Eat bread there and prophesy there, but never again prophesy at Bethel, for it's a king's sanctuary, it's a temple of the kingdom. He says, Amos, get out of here.

Quit preaching against Israel. Man, why don't you go to Judah? They might listen to you. Go somewhere else and listen to what Amos says.

I love this. Amos answered and said to Amaziah, I was no prophet, nor a prophet's son. I was a herdsman. I was a dresser of sycamore figs. But the Lord took me from following the flock, and the Lord said to me, go, prophesy to my people Israel. Now therefore, hear the word of the Lord.

You say, don't prophesy against Israel, and don't preach against the house of Isaac. Therefore, thus says the Lord, your wife's gonna be a prostitute in the city, and your sons and your daughters shall fall by the sword. What I loved about that was, here's this guy who's prophesying a very unpopular message, and someone's trying to shut him up, and his answer is, he goes, look, look, dude, who am I? I'm not like a prophet.

You kidding me? I wasn't like some prophet's son born to be this great. I was a herdsman. I was like working on fig trees.

It goes, here I am watching these sheep, and God calls me to speak for him? Me, I'm a nobody. I shouldn't have amounted to anything. I should just still be watching sheep right now, and then God says, no, I'm gonna give you a voice, and you're gonna speak to Israel.

He goes, so you know what? I'm gonna do it, because this is an honor. Yeah, I'm preaching judgment against Israel. I know they don't like it, but I'm gonna go back, because who am I? And I get to speak for Almighty God.

And by the way, your wife's gonna be a whore, and your kids are gonna die. You know, it's like, wow, you know? But he was just saying, you know what? This is who I am. This is what I'm gonna do.

And I, man, I pray for you, because I want that boldness in my life. I want it in your life. We live in a time, like we just heard, times are evil.

We live in a generation where everyone is trying to shut us up. It is getting less and less popular. And it's like, who's gonna keep speaking for God? Who's gonna say, yeah, I realize this, but who am I? And God's entrusted me with this message, and I'm gonna say it.

And so if I'm rejected, if I die for it, well, that's cool, because I was a nobody. I shouldn't have been given this platform. Here I am, so let me use it for the Lord, because it'll sneak up on you.

And it's crazy how the enemy gets in there and gets you to rethink, and to shut up just a little bit more, a little bit more every year, to pretty soon, you're just saying what everyone else wants to hear. And I caught myself, and I will really close with this, I think. I caught myself last Easter.

Last Easter, I was gonna speak in Orange County, and I was excited, no, no, no, it wasn't Orange County. It was in Hollywood Bowl, that's what got me excited, because it was in Orange County. No, it was Hollywood Bowl.

I was excited because it was a new crowd. And for those of us who are pastors, when you have a new crowd, you're excited, because that means you can use an old message. I'm thinking, oh, this is an easy Easter.

And plus, you get to scroll through all your old Easter messages, which are the best, you know? Because that's your one Sunday, you gotta nail it. So I'm thinking, okay, easy Easter. Let me go through my old messages.

You guys, this is where I caught myself. I started reading these old sermons, and I go, did I say that? I said that? And I read in some of my early sermons, I saw in the words, I go, man, I used to be more bold. I used to be more bold, and I used to have this attitude, I don't care if you all leave the church, I wanna please him, and I'm gonna tell you what's in that book, whether you like it or not.

But then the years of criticism, and when social media came out, and people start tweeting every word you say, and every mistake you make, then you start going, man, I don't want 100 emails this week. How can I say this to not get that response? How can I say it in such a way that this article won't be written about me? How can I not make the headlines of this? Let me say it this way, and I just realized, man, not in a crazy way, but I know I had lost it. I had lost some of that original boldness.

I could just read it on those pages. And I'm going, man, what happened? Where's the old, I want the old Francis back. That would just say anything to anyone.

I'm going, God, I want that back. And the worst part was I was reading this one sermon, and this, man, it killed me. I was reading about the birth of my son, this story, because my son was born that week when I preached that sermon.

And I'm reading about it, and telling the congregation about it. I was telling them how my wife and I had a discussion before she went into labor, like should we let our oldest daughter come? We had a 10-year-old daughter at the time, and going, gosh, I don't know. We're going back and forth.

Is it too much? But then we decided, yeah, let's bring her, because maybe she should see it. It'll keep her from messing around. And so we bring her, and it's an exciting moment for me, because my son is about to be born.

I've got three daughters at that time, and here comes my son. And right before she's about to give birth, the doctor looks at my daughter and says, would you like to deliver your little brother? And puts little gloves on her, little gown on her, little goggles on her. Imagine this scene, my little, my biggest, my daughter, my firstborn, there delivering my son with tears coming down her face.

Picture a little girl just so excited, but so confused, and just seeing all of this. Wow, this is weird. Really, okay? Okay, all right, let's, we're really gonna do it.

It's good, it's probably a dumb story. Oh no, they're saying come back, come back. False alarm, they're telling us it's okay.

All right, okay. All right, okay, I'll finish it up real fast. Okay.

Okay, so you got it, my daughter's crying, blah, blah, blah, baby's coming out. And as a man, you're just feeling all of these thoughts. Your son's coming out, going, man, we're gonna hunt.

All these feelings, and my daughter crying, gets the baby. But I'm reading the sermon, and at the end of that story, what I say is, I say, as amazing as that was, I said that paled in comparison to my time alone with Jesus this week. And I read that statement, and I remembered back.

I remember, man, I remember that week. And I remember having such great time with the Lord that even the birth of my son was like, man, it's not that, it was good, it was awesome. But compared to talking to him, and when I read that, it broke my heart because what I realized, not only did I lose some boldness,

but that love that I used to enjoy with Jesus, I lost some of that.

I thought, Lord, I don't feel that way with you like I used to. Would you bring back my first love? Would you restore that first love? And I felt like the Lord just kept speaking this word to me from Revelation 3, where he says, strengthen what remains and is about to die. Strengthen what remains and is about to die.

I kept hearing those words just ringing in my head, Revelation, and it was a word of encouragement from God because he was saying to me, Francis, strengthen what remains and is about to die. He goes, Francis, I know you. I know inside of you is a prophet's heart where you'll just say whatever people, whatever I want you to say, so get back to that.

Strengthen what remains, because I know it's still in you, but it's about to die, it's about to die, get back. Strengthen what remains. And that love, I know you love me more than anything on that earth, you're just getting distracted by all this stuff.

Strengthen that back up again, get back to where you were and take it to another level. And so this year has been about, God, that's right, just, I don't care, I don't care who's in the room. This is what your God, who's giving you this breath that you're breathing right now, here's what he has to say and just to lay it out and know that I'm gonna be in his presence any second, to say, you know what, yes, as much as I love people, my own family, Jesus, you are my first love, I wanna get back to that time with you, that time alone with you, to where everything pales in comparison.

And I just wonder if God isn't saying the same thing to some of you. Strengthen what remains and is about to die, because maybe people have lied to you because they catered to you so much. They make you think that everything's fine because you just write a check or because they're trying to get something from you.

And I'm saying, read this book for yourself. What does it say? And then just do it and don't let anyone stop you. Let me pray for you.

God, help us to make the right decisions when we're down here. The world can be so alluring. God, I just pray that we don't listen to the false prophets out there, that we really hold on to your word.

I pray for every man and woman in this room that they would dig deep into your word and love your word and search your word and do your word, do whatever it says, and not let others talk them out of it. In Jesus' name I pray, amen. Thank you.

I pray for every man and woman in this room that they would dig deep into your word

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