

Sanctified in Christ

by Neil T. Anderson

Neil T. Anderson's sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding sanctification as a transformative process that aligns believers with their identity in Christ.

Duration: 50:56

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Romans 3:23, Romans 6:23, Ephesians 1:1, Ephesians 2:8-9, Colossians 2:6-7, 2 Thessalonians 3:5

Topics: "Sanctification"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of humility in the face of life's challenges. He encourages listeners to humble themselves before God and learn the lessons that He wants them to learn. The preacher shares a story of a missionary couple who dedicated their lives to serving God in Africa for 50 years. He highlights the need to truly internalize and apply the teachings of God, rather than simply hearing them without allowing them to impact one's heart. The sermon also touches on the concept of sanctification and the process of conforming to the image of God.

Transcript

About the registrations this year from the other four times we've had this conference is that rather than just having everybody come individually, seeing the need to be equipped for spiritual warfare and things like that, we're getting a lot more registrations from churches that are sending people. That means that the church has changed its view on these things and many people are understanding that this is important. We need to be able to talk about the spiritual battle without getting spooked and we need to be able to be equipped to deal with it and not have it be some big spooky haunted thing.

And one of the men responsible for that change, probably more than any man in America, as a tool in God's hand to help mainstream this message has been Neil Anderson. Neil has been able to express himself in books and in conferences and through Freedom in Christ Ministries in a way that has been brought into the church, probably more so than any other man alive today. And so it's our great privilege and honor to welcome to the podium Dr. Neil Anderson.

Thank you, Dan. I like you too. And I like Mark Bubeck, don't you? You know, a lot of people don't know about Mark that he has basically developed a discipline of prayer walking an hour every morning.

You can always tell that because it shows on his countenance and what's good about that is, is that somebody who walks that close with God can tell the rest of us what he looks like. And Mark, thank you for doing that this morning for all of us. I met a couple yesterday that said they were from Florida here and had never seen snow.

Well, God gave us the month of March, so that those of us who don't know what a hangover is, who don't drink and know what a hangover is. And sometimes we kind of feel like, is it ever going to end up here in the North? But it does. I got to tell you about three pastors who died and went to hell.

And one was a Calvinist and the other one was an Armenian and the other one was a Pentecostal. And they were a little bit surprised to see each other there. And so they looked at the Calvinist because they're always the most erudite and said, sir, how do you account for the fact that you are here? He said, well, I've always believed in the sovereignty of God and divine election.

And I guess I wasn't one of them. And they looked at the Armenian and said, sir, why are you here? He said, well, I've lived a perfect life almost until the day before I died and I really blew it. I guess that's why I'm here.

And they looked at the Pentecostal and said, sir, why are you here? He said, I declare by faith that I'm not here. Now, chances are, I just stepped on somebody's theological toes here. But I honestly believe when we get on the other side of eternity, we're all going to go look back at our own theology and go, oops.

In all honesty, after serving God full time for over 25 years, I got to be honest with you folks and look back and tell you that my theology has changed. What has not changed is the truth. I'm not even very much committed to my own theology anymore.

What I'm committed to is true. Theology is man's attempt to systematize truth, isn't it? That's what it is. And I think we all have to be open to the fact that we have not arrived.

From God's perspective, you and I got one eye right now starting to slightly open. For now we see dimly. Someday we shall see completely.

And saying all of that, I want to introduce the concept of sanctification, which everybody happily is all unified in total agreement with in the body of Christ. I don't know of one seminary that is in perfect agreement with each other on their faculty. So this is with fear and trembling that I address this.

Maybe one of the reasons that it reigns as such a confusion amongst us is because that's God's will for our life. That's an amazing statement. This is God's will for your life.

You're a sanctification. First Thessalonians 4.3. Is it not? The whole process of beginning our walk with God and then conforming to his image is the doctrine of sanctification. Is there one more important? Well, every doctrine is important, obviously, but this is where we're at right now.

We're in the process of being conformed to the image of God. And so understanding that is just paramount. And if I never sold another copy of the book, Common Maid Holy, just the process of writing that, which was a nine month process, gave birth to a baby.

This one was an elephant and boy, it came hard. A lot of birth pains. But if I did it for no other reason than for my own edification, it would have been worth the journey.

I did it with Bob Sosey, who I think is one of the most gifted, honest, gracious theologians in our country. And I just want to say publicly, I count that an unbelievable privilege. He's been on my board for years, but surely the most respected man at Talbot School of Theology and I think around the country.

And we knew writing it that I was a pragmatist and he was an idealist. Halfway through, he said, this is really interesting. He said, you think holistically, I think linearly, which is true.

But hopefully that gave us a well-run book. But I came to a conclusion. I think we need a reformation again on sanctification.

We've had a good one on justification, but our people aren't growing. They're sitting in churches for years. We're just glutted with Christian books, radio programs, television, people proclaiming the truth and we're sliding backwards.

Why in the world is that? You know, the paradox of that to me is I can go over to the Philippines and I have several times and I can see a person who can't read, absolutely fall in love with God, bear fruit everywhere. And then I go back to some of our esteemed professors and they've never led anybody to Christ and not bearing any fruit at all that I can visibly see. Now that's kind of embarrassing to a guy who holds five seminary degrees, who believes in higher education.

But somewhere there's a balance between these two issues and I want to kind of address that if I can. Two points, you know, what essentially is sanctification and why aren't we growing? That's what I want to address. I used to tell seminary students at Talbot, I said, when you get out there in ministry, I said, the greatest asset you'll have in your church is mature saints.

Don't alienate them. They've learned things you haven't learned yet. Are they able to be kind to you? They may take you out for lunch and suggest you make some changes in your life.

Listen to them. They're probably right. And I said, on the other hand, when you get out there in ministry, the greatest liability that you will have are saints that just got old and didn't mature because all they want to do is censor.

You can't do that around here, young man. We've never done it that way before. They'll kill the church, folks, but it isn't their fault.

If it goes back anywhere, it goes back to people like me, who've taught at seminaries for years, who gave our people the wrong goal. The number one problem today in Christian education is right there, we've got the wrong goal. We make doctrine or knowledge an end in itself.

You do that, you'll distort the very purpose for which it was intended. What's the greatest commandment? You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind. The second is like unto it.

You shall love your neighbors as yourself. If you've done that, how much have you done? All. The law and the prophets.

Paul's very clear. The goal of our instruction is love. It's character transformation.

Doesn't it bother you that our people could sit under your ministry for years and years on end, read good books, and not grow one bit? No more mature now than they were 20, 30 years ago. No more loving, no more kind, no more patient. Something's wrong.

If our sanctification process is working, then every year of my life, I'll be able to look back and say, I'm more loving now than I was last year, more kind. I have a greater degree of self-control in my life this year than I did last year. That ought to be a progressive process in every one of our lives.

Let's look at the whole issue of sanctification. And the problem here, it gets associated oftentimes with justification. That's not true.

There are two totally different doctrines. You have been justified by the grace of God as past tense. It's a point of time.

It's already happened for you. Now, therefore, having been past tense justified, we have peace with God. It's a done deal in that regard.

If you are born again, child of God, he died once for all, your sins are forgiven. That's not sanctification. Sanctification has one very interesting parallel to salvation.

They occur in the New Testament past, present, and future tense. You have been saved. You are being saved.

And someday you shall fully be saved from the wrath that is to come. You haven't experienced the ultimate of salvation yet. Now we have been given the Holy Spirit as a seal, a pledge onto the day of redemption.

I'm sure you're aware of that as you read your New Testament. Now we have the assurance of that. I've written these things unto you that you may know that you have eternal life.

And so I have that assurance. I believe we all could and should have that in our present life. Sanctification, as applied to the believer as our holiness or our righteousness, is also past, present, and future tense.

Now that has created some interesting problems in our understanding what sanctification is. In my own research and studying of this, I was really surprised as to how each tense occurs in frequency in our New Testament as applied to the believer, past, present, and future. Just out of curiosity here, how many would think that in terms of being sanctified or righteous or holy in the presence of God occurs more commonly in the past tense? How many would guess that? About three hands.

How many would guess present tense? A few more hands. How many would guess future tense? Quite a few hands. How many don't want to commit themselves in front of anybody right now? Now I understand that.

I'd have been hesitant too. Actually, it's past tense. That was a surprise to me.

Well, what's happened is, and I'm sure these are terms you're familiar with here, but theologians then have really seen sanctification in two camps. One is the positional sanctification, focusing on past tense sanctification, and the other is progressive, or sometimes called experiential sanctification, looking at the progressive aspect. In other words, growth or maturity.

Now, I came from kind of a Reformed background in terms of the theological understanding of this. I have focused and been led to understand that sanctification is progressive, that essentially it is synonymous with growth or maturity. I mean, you could almost use those and interchange with each other.

How many would identify with that? How many would? Yeah, that's probably most of you. That would be how I understood it going into this. And that's how I left seminary.

I really kind of heard that, well, that's positional truth, as though it's not real truth. You know, that's how I kind of was postured to that. Well, it's just positional, but here's your experience.

And so, therefore, it's almost like it isn't true. Imagine my shock in helping people, because I left the pastorate and went to seminary to teach, and really trying to gain an understanding of what is the answer for these people's problems. I knew in my heart Christ was the answer and truth would set people free.

And I was dealing with people in my churches who I finally had my eyes opened up, who were in some kind of a spiritual battle, but I didn't have an answer for them. That's why I started teaching the class. Not because I had the answers, I was trying to figure them out.

And, you know, you've heard this story. My classes grew and grew and mushroomed as a THM elective and ended up with 250 students one year, which is a phenomenon for a seminary. The reason was, as I was starting to see the lives of our students changed.

And part of the understanding in my own growth was that I came at it backwards. I was looking at this thing from a spiritual warfare perspective, but the one common denominator I found in every person that was struggling. I didn't care if it was panic attacks, eating disorders, sexual addictions, whatever.

The one common denominator was none of them knew who they were in Christ. Where was the Abba Father? If the Holy Spirit is bearing witness with my spirit, why weren't they sensing that? Well, I come to realize that most of our people are not firmly rooted in Christ. They have no idea what it means to be a child of God.

They really haven't come to understand the whole positional truth that we are in Christ. And yet, I come to believe that that serves the entire basis for our process of growing and conforming to His image. That progressive sanctification essentially is working out, in my own experience, who I already am.

Not knowing that most of our people are desperately trying to become somebody they already are. Now let me just illustrate this. How many here, as a believer, when you came to Christ, you know, maybe not now, but looking back in your early years as a Christian, would clearly understand that as a Christian that you're a sinner saved by grace? How many would? Most of you.

How many were really taught and knew from the beginning that you were actually a saint? Who would sin? Now, lot less hands. Why? This isn't even a debate, folks. If you use the King James Version of the Bible, for instance, 240 times Christians have been identified as saints, or righteous, or holy ones.

Non-believers, about 330 times, have been identified as not. Or as sinners. As sinners.

I mean, you know, that's unarguable. Just pick up your Bible, just do good word studying, you'll find that that's true. Now why is it? Have you ever seen a letter written to the sinners at Ephesus? It's written to the saints.

And you say, well, you're whitewashing sin. No, I'm not. I'm giving you a possibility of overcoming it.

I'm alive in Christ, I'm dead to sin. And there's a positional truth here that serves as the entire foundation for my ability to be able to conform to the image of God. But our people are not firmly rooted in Christ.

They have no idea who they are, or what it means to be a child of God. Well, I came at that from the back door, to be honest with you, because I discovered that in the people I was working with. Well, here's another intriguing one, just to illustrate what I'm talking about.

How many understand that right now, as you are presently here today, understand that your heart is deceitful and desperately sick? Where did you get that from? Jeremiah 17. Now why would your heart at that time even be deceitful and desperately sick? Because you didn't have the life of Christ within you. Your entire mind was programmed from the external world.

That's why it's desperately sick. That's essentially what the flesh is. You find a similar statement about the heart concerning you in the New Testament.

Find one. Isn't that interesting? Not only that, but if you read in Ezekiel, that one of the great prophecies from Ezekiel is that he would put a new heart and a new spirit within us. And I believe he clearly equates that to our particular time of life.

And so we're dealing with the issue here of the heart. Is not the teaching on the Sermon of the Mount that unless your righteousness exceeds that of the Pharisees, you have no hope for eternal life. In other words, no matter how hard you try yourself to live that Christian life, you are not.

Your righteousness will be like a dirty rag. And I can't do anything about that. There's the Macalvin side, I suppose.

It requires the grace of God to deal with my sin. I can't change my heart. No kind of external behavior can change my heart.

That has to be changed by God. And now the tension is even in Ezekiel, there's another one that says, so put on a new heart and put on a new spirit. And you kind of go, whoa, here's the issue.

See, here's the tension. Even in the New Testament, it says the old man is dead. The new man is here.

You're no longer in Adam. You are in Christ. You were in the kingdom of darkness, but now you're in the kingdom of God's beloved son.

All of that is wonderfully true. And then another verse will say, put off your old man. You say, well, wait a minute.

What are we talking about here? Well, essentially what you're doing is you're putting off the effects of the old man. I've never really liked the NIV's translating flesh as old nature. But if you understand that to me, that was my nature that I learned living my life independent of God, then I can understand a little better where they're coming from in that regard.

I just don't care for the use of the word nature because in terms of that implies essence. And who am I in essence? I'm a child of God. But let me just illustrate this.

When I moved out the farm in Minnesota to Arizona, I'll never forget just driving down the street with my parents and seeing orange trees growing. Wow. This seems like in the boulevards.

And it was just amazing. I just, look at that. Wow.

And I went and picked one and then peeled it and started to eat it because I spit it out immediately. It was an ornamental orange. I thought, sick, is that stupid or what? Why would you plant an ornamental orange? Why don't you plant one we could at least eat the fruit from? I mean, it looked good, but it wasn't any good.

And then I kind of find out that the reason they plant an ornamental orange is because it's a much hardier stock. It would survive the freezes and the frost. I suspect they do that in Florida too, but they surely do in Arizona.

What happens is they allow that rootstock to grow up and then they'll cut it off and graft in a navel orange or a Valencia. Let's say navel orange. Now actually when that happens, what grows above that graft? Navel orange.

I mean, totally. What's the nature of it? Above the graft? Navel orange. How will you know? It's kind of fascinating because you drive out and you see all these orange groves or orchards, whatever.

Apple, orchard, orange grove. Orange grove. But anyway, you look out there and you say, well actually that's just a bunch of rootstock.

Nobody would doubt they would say that. Nobody would say that. They would say that's navel orange.

Why would they say that? Well, they will know it because of its fruit. Are you following me folks? You will know them for their fruit. He says, from now on I recognize no man according to the flesh.

We knew Christ once that way, but we know him that way no longer. Come on folks, we do it all the time. You stood and identified that your heart is deceitful and that you are a sinner.

You just identified yourself according to who you were in Adam, not who you are in Christ. I can't overstate how important and critical this is. See how great a love of the Father is bestowed upon us that we should be called sons of God.

Such we are. Now we still got that old rootstock because we long to be clothed and it grabs all the nutrition so I can physically continue to exist on planet earth. But someday I'm going to jettison this old earth suit and be absent from the body present with the Lord.

And I'm not going to junk up heaven folks with an old nature. Now, realizing how foundational that is, because nobody can consistently behave in a way that's inconsistent with how they perceive themselves. And so when I work out my salvation, I'm not working for it.

It's already been worked in by the grace of God. I couldn't accomplish that myself. God accomplished that for me.

And I'm in a journey right now becoming more and more like Christ. The only hope that I had for that being possible is that I am right now firmly rooted in Christ. That's the only hope I got.

That righteousness can't come from me, can't come from my works. It has to come from God. That's why in first John, he could actually say nothing born of God sins.

Now we look at that and say, well, I'm born of God, but she was, I sin, you know. And I say, well, you just misunderstood that passage. Nothing born of God.

Nothing that comes from God sins. And so having a new heart within me, a new spirit within me, nothing comes from that sins. Can't.

Can't come from God and sin. So I'm stuck here, living in this physical body that's decaying, but my inner man is being renewed day by day. Now there's so much theology behind this.

You know, how do you talk in 45 minutes about a 400 page book? You know, it's, but I'll pick it up a little bit again afterwards here. But if you want to look at a progressive of growth here, then look at Colossians chapter two with me and Colossians chapter two. It's funny as you turn here, I don't want to, you know, it's really kind of wrong to stereotype, but essentially the holiness movement has really focused on past tense sanctification positional.

It's a done deal. And that can lead to caricatures like this. Well, I haven't sinned in 20 years.

Really. Could I ask your wife, you know, and she would agree with that. It's, you know, you end up with a subtle denial.

The other hand, you can get on the other side of the teeter totter and, and spend the rest of your life trying to become somebody you already are not understanding, you know, the first half of Paul's epistles, which essentially are designed to get us firmly rooted in Christ. So I knew who I am. I'm a child of God.

Now don't make light of this folks. You can just see evidences of this all over the world. And I'll come back and give you a classic illustration of that in a few moments or so, but look at what he's saying here.

Verse six, therefore, as you have received Christ, Jesus, the Lord, so walk how in him having been firmly rooted and now being built up how in him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed and overflowing with gratitude. Now, the opposite of that would be the next verse, which I'm afraid it has an incredible inroads into our seminaries and Bible schools, and frankly, Christian counseling. You know, we've picked up too much of the philosophies of this world instead of that, which is in Christ.

Verse nine comes back for in him, all the fullness of DD dwells in bodily forming in him. You have been made complete. He is the head overall rule and authority.

Now, when I say this, if you look at first Corinthians four, Paul says, I submit to you, my beloved brother, Timothy, who will remind you of my ways, which are in Christ, which I teach in all churches all the time. That's false theology in Christ. There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus for the law of life in Christ.

Jesus has set you free past tense from the law of sin and of death is the law of sin and of death still here. Oh, sure. So it's a law.

That's why it points it up. Can't do away with the law. So how do you deal with it? Then you overcome it by a law greater than that, which is the law of life in Christ.

Jesus, Paul's entire theology is based on the fact that we have to be firmly rooted in Christ. You know, it's like looking at John 15, eight by this is my father glorified that we bear much fruit. We got to bear fruit.

No, you don't. You got to abide in Christ. If you abide in Christ, you will bear fruit.

Now that is so fundamental, but so overlooked. We're out here trying to bear fruit without abiding in Christ. Can't do it apart from Christ.

You're not handicapped or limited in what you could do apart from Christ. You can do nothing. Do you believe it? I hope so.

You can't set anybody free, folks. I don't even think you can lead anybody to Christ. Nobody comes to the father.

At least he calls them. I mean, that's hard for us to get to that orientation, but we have, we look for a better method. And old Ian Bounds used to say, God's looking for better men.

And he's not trying to help you do something better. He's trying to make you be better. And in his image for that matter, John puts another parallel to this thing.

And I'm going to look at that in our session this afternoon, but he would say he would identify as maybe as little children, young men, old men. I'll just look at that for a moment. I've written these things unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven.

In other words, you've overcome the penalty of sin. I'm written to you, old man, because you've known him from the beginning. I believe he's implying a deep experiential reverential walk with God like Mark.

And then he says, I'm writing to you, young men. Why? Because you've overcome the evil one. I think you could safely say, because you've overcome the power of sin.

Now from John's perspective here, how are we going to help a person move to a full stature of all that God intended them to be, if they haven't learned to overcome the evil one, since half the world doesn't even believe he exists. Nor do I have the responsibility given to us by God to overcome it. Right? To be honest with the text.

And I don't say that lightly because a study was done at Princeton University. Here's what they found out about five years ago now. It crossed the country.

They said 60% of the Catholics they polled believe that New Age teaching was compatible with Christianity. Compatible is the antithesis of it. 25% of the Protestants believe that.

50% of the Catholics didn't believe in a personal devil. 40% of the Protestants did. My goodness, what Bible are you reading? The major issue in the Bible is a contest between the kingdom of darkness and the kingdom of light.

Between the Christ and the Antichrist. We have a significant role to play in the process, but folks, the battle in Genesis was a battle between God and Satan, and it is in Revelation. And we're in the process of it.

Jesus came down to do the works of Satan. That's why he came. 1 John 3.8. It's really amazing how somehow or another we can somehow detach ourselves from the reality of the spiritual world we're living in and come up with some natural answer.

That's not Christianity. We're creating the image of God, and God's a spirit. So what would that make you? Well, that's what he's trying to make you, I guess.

So anyway, why aren't we growing then? Man, we're glutted with material and books and Bibles everywhere. Every home, we've got probably four or five different versions or the same copy. And let me just quickly say, because I'll pick this up a lot more later, but number one, I think the reason we are not firmly rooted in Christ is it's just simply a lack of repentance.

I can see this easier sometimes when I get out of my culture. We've got a guy over in the Ivory Coast right now and had an incredible time in Liberia working out some corporate repentance on that level. But we can see it over there.

We went over from our Western world and went over to Africa, which is by the end of this century will be the largest populated Christian nation in the world. There are more Christians supposedly in Africa than there are in the United States. If it was 5% at the beginning of this century, it'll be almost 50% by the end.

You know what we ended up with though? We ended up with a church a mile wide and an inch deep. And we look at Liberia and what happened here, the national language is English. When slaves were brought back, that's where they were brought back to.

It's almost essentially supposedly a Christian country. Then why did it break down so bad? Why are we seeing incredible chaos in society in Rwanda and other places when 50% would identify themselves as Christians? Well, there may be another answer, but here's mine. I think what happened was we went over and said, how'd you like to have all your sins forgiven and live forever? You bet.

And so they made a commitment to Christ. Now I'm not belittling that. They may have truly been born again at that time.

But when the pressures came, they fell back to their tribal identities and their pagan practices. All over Africa you can see that. It's just tragic what happens.

Why? Were they firmly rooted in Christ? Why does scripture say, you're neither Jew nor Gentile, bondsman nor freeman, barbarian or Scythian, for Christ is all and in all. It's no small thing to understand who we are in Christ, what it means to be a child of God. It means he's received him to then be given the right to become children of God.

I mean, this is the core of our Christianity. How are we taught to pray? Our father who art in heaven. What would that make you? His child.

Not a small thing. People going out trying to make a name for themselves. What name could you make for yourself that's better than being called a child of God? With lack of repentance, what happens is they not only were established in Christ, so they understood who they were, but they fell back to their tribal identities and their pagan practices.

And you can see that all over the world. And that's the lack of repentance. Without repentance, you see, I come to Christ, man, my sins are forgiven.

And you say, but God took care of all that at the cross. In one sense, that's really true. It's like looking at freedom.

Did you know, biblically, that freedom is a positional truth? All those who have died with Christ are freed from sin. That's positionally true. How many are living that way? See, that's the tension between the

indicative, what God has done, and the imperative, what we need to do.

So we have a whole chapter in the book. Who is ultimately responsible for our sanctification? I think you'd have to conclude with this. Initially, it has to be God.

He must initiate the process. But we have a responsibility to play. You don't study, you don't grow.

And so it's a critical part of understanding the balance that we have between God's sovereignty and man's responsibility. That we work cooperatively with God to become the person that God created us to be. But God has to be the initiator in that process, I do believe.

Well, tragically, what happens is we come to Christ, and without repentance, we believe this, but we still believe this. And see, true repentance wouldn't allow that. If this is true, then that's no longer true.

That's why the early church would stand very publicly and say, I renounce you, Satan, and all your works and all your ways. Because when you come to church, you bring our baggage with us, and we go to our homes, we take our baggage with us. I said, is there some way to genuine repentance, I can set myself free from my past? Now, positionally, that is not only possible because of the presence of Christ and the truth that I'm a new creation in Christ, but I have to appropriate that.

You cannot passively take your place in Christ. Even the armor of God, the most overlooked part of it is, is that put on, take up, it requires an active part. He's provided all we need for us to live a free, victorious life.

But we have to assume our responsibility. I can't overstate that. It isn't that I'm denying the sovereignty of God, I'm resting in it.

Thank God for all that he's done that I couldn't do for myself. But truth of the matter is now, because I'm a new creation in Christ, now I can become the person God created in me. And I don't believe that's just a question of discipline.

See, we didn't even include that in the book. Because our Western world would say, well, what are you to do? And we would somehow think we're going to make ourselves righteous by just learning to discipline ourselves. Actually, self-control is a fruit of the Spirit.

I think the primary means is to abide in Christ and walk by the Spirit. Just trying to change a person's behavior without changing their belief will lead either to drivenness or rebellion, one of the two. Can only be the natural results of that.

Another reason I think that, and we've got two chapters devoted to it, of why we're struggling. We have three rather formidable enemies, the world, the flesh, and the devil. And John, when he talks about little children and old men in the faith, he follows that very quickly.

Don't fall in love with the world. And somehow or another we need to crucify ourselves to the world and the flesh. And we can resist the devil and he will flee from us.

Last one, unfortunately, is the most overlooked part of our, I think, our Western world for that matter. Thirdly, and I'm going to have to deal with this this afternoon, the lack of incarnational truth. Why could I sit there as a seminary prof for three years, see people come in very excited about learning and growing, and some of them actually left depressed.

You know, three years of intensive seminary training, and a lot of them weren't any more spiritual when they left than when they came. Knowledgeable. You know, it's a frightening thing that you could educate a person's mind and not have it affect their character.

It's a frightening thing to education beyond their character, educate a person's mind beyond their character. And reduce our walk with God down to some intellectual exercise instead of a dynamic relational experience with him day by day in my life. Here's what we come to find out.

In reference to the heart, over 800 some references in the Bible, a little over 200 relate the heart to the faculty of the mind or of thinking. As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he. A little less than that relates it to the will.

A little less than that, about 165 times, is related to the emotion. And we have a tendency to think the heart is the seat of our emotion. Not true.

It's the seat of our reflection. But the number of times it says that we have to allow that truth to enter into our heart. Where do you forgive from your heart? That's the core of your being here.

We can intellectualize this thing and learn all about God and never really know him. That's a frightening scenario to me. You can answer all the questions in theology one, two, and three of all the right attributes of God.

And then you come to ask, how do you feel about him? Oh, he likes me. That truth, for some reason, hasn't penetrated their heart. You know, let me illustrate this.

Suppose you go home tonight, you ride home in your car, and you've got a beautiful praise tape, and somebody else is riding with you, and you're having a conversation, even though that tape is playing and your ear is hearing it. But it's having no effect on you right now. Virtually none at all.

Because you have selectively tuned that out. And you're talking, and then suddenly a pause in the conversation, and suddenly you both tune in. And listen, next thing you know, it touches your heart.

And you get caught up with that sense of worship and praise. And it wouldn't be unsurprising that suddenly maybe even tears start coming down to your eyes. And then you turn, are you listening to this? You want to express that.

We've really discovered, and boy, a lot of theology goes into this thing, that when truth enters into that heart, it touches the affect just like that, which drives the will. And then when I do it, then it comes around and increases my concept of knowledge. It's like a slinky.

And you can stop that process anywhere. You can know what God says, but never allow it to enter into the heart. And allowing it to enter into the heart, it ends up in all spiritual wisdom and understanding.

And you can stop it right there and not do it. You don't do it, folks. You stop the growth process.

And you've got a person who keeps going back, always learning, but never able to come to the knowledge of the truth, because it never really, truly touched the core of their life. And see, that's the great evangelical air. We go to church, we critique the message.

Well, come on, folks, you don't sit in judgment of the message. The message sits in judgment of you. And we critique the choir.

How'd you like the music this morning? I didn't like it, it was too loud. Oh, for crying out loud, don't critique the message, enter in and worship God. You know what I find amongst some of my Pentecostal friends, they enter in, but nobody's critiquing.

Somewhere there's a balance here. I don't feel comfortable with either group anymore. Everybody's sitting out here learning, but never coming to the knowledge of the truth, never changing in their life.

Dead orthodoxy is just, frankly, dead orthodoxy. Then there's a group over here, man, they're entering in, but that's zero without knowledge. And somewhere there's a basis for a balance between that in our life.

I'm appealing to you, enter in to what God is doing today. Enter into the kingdom of God with all your heart. Love the Lord with all your heart.

Don't sit around and critique. I didn't like that. And we'll throw it away then and get into the truth someplace.

It's just amazing how we want to be inspectors. And we've just taken the role of God and he's the inspector, folks. We're the inspected.

And now that brings my last point. My last point is that, you know, why isn't this happening? And I really honestly submit to you, I think it's a lack of brokenness in our own life. In writing Rivers of Revival with Elmer Towns, I did the micro part of it.

I came to a conclusion and I could never be talked out of it. What are the dams that are holding the rivers back right now? I'm telling you, it is not the pimp and it's not the prostitute. It's the self-sufficiency of our leadership.

It's the self-sufficiency of our leadership. We think we can do it. And you can't do it.

You can't do it. Most of you, if you read some of my stuff, a couple of my books in the last chapter, I talked about the suffering, the sanctification. And Bob recounts his story.

And Bob is a stoic kind of a man. And I love Bob. So he's just a tremendous man of God.

And he has two children. One has finished his doctorate and is now a missionary over in Ukraine. And Mark was a student of mine years ago.

Neat man. Becky, his daughter, was every parent's dream. In every dimension of life.

I don't know of one woman at her age of 24, I think at the time, that I would look at had as much going for her as she did. She just had friends. She was a public school teacher at the time when she dropped over in front of her fifth grade class and died.

You know, I was just absolutely incredible. I'm not sure her husband's ever quite recovered from it. No warning, just found a little congenital heart defect and bam, died right in front of her kids.

Funeral's unbelievable. I imagine most of the students there sat there and wondered, how's old Bob going to handle this? Well, he's stoic, you know, but he says in the last chapter, he said, I didn't know how

people would handle that before until God put me through that. And there's a lot of pain living in this fallen world, folks.

I mean, it's, you've heard my story of when for 15 months, I didn't know whether my wife was going to live or die. And we lost everything we had, everything we had. Back about 85 or 86, I was a seminary prof at the time.

And man, people don't even know how to respond to you when you go through something like that. And I had three of Job's friends show up to try to help me out. And that was rather painful.

And God gave me something I couldn't fix. Everybody in my family knew, well, Neal can fix it. You know, I couldn't fix it, folks, no matter what I did, no matter what I said, no matter how hard I prayed, and no matter what I thought.

I got caught in one of the worst world conflicts of my life. Was I her pastor, her counselor, her disciple, or was I her husband? And I realized I could only be her husband. Somebody else had to do that, but I couldn't fix this thing.

I don't even think God was calling me to fix it. Mine was to hold on to Joanne every day and say, this too will pass. What I've never shared in the books, I want to share with you this morning.

In the middle of that crisis, when we had just sold our house, we didn't have much, and we lost everything. But we were living in a rental house, and I sold the house to get out of debt, and medical bills were incredible. Couldn't find anything physically wrong, so they wanted to make a head case out of it, or a hormone case, and none was really the case.

But it was a desperate time. I took my son over to a soccer game, and came back, and there was a note on my door that a gal in our church, who was indiscriminately taking prescription medications from her doctor husband, became chemically addicted, and convinced my wife that she was, and checked her into a chemical dependency ward. She was not.

I admit she was afraid of that possibility, but she was only three months on a mild tranquilizer. You will not become chemically addicted with that, folks. And this was bizarre.

And I jumped in my car, and I raced over there, and I said, how in the world did she check herself in? We don't have any money. Well, she just cleared out, checked our credit card, and committed us to \$3,000. And man, I didn't have \$3,000.

I didn't have nothing else to sell. I was about as low on my life. I said, well, can I see her? No, we got a rule here, you can't see her for 48 hours.

So I couldn't see her. The only way I could, is if I sat every week in a co-dependency group, and had to say that I was a co-addict, and a co-dependent, if I didn't say it, they was all in denial, and wouldn't go on until I admitted. And if it isn't enough, folks, to add a little insult to injury, everybody that was on staff, in that chemical dependency unit, from administration to counselors, were all homosexual.

And I remember saying one time, how concerned I was for Joanne, because in a lot of those places, the language is really quite rough. And Joanne is a very sensitive person, and I said, you know, I just, I'm struggling with Joanne, you know, and just the language. And as soon as I said that, I have never felt the

wrath of anybody on me like I did then.

You bigot, you whatever. I think I could safely say it was the lowest time of my life. Here I am on seminary class.

I got a wife I can't fix. I'm sitting here, getting my nose stuck in it every week, and going around in a circle. I'm a co-addict, I'm a co-dependent.

Knowing in my heart that's not true. But I come to find out that we weren't there for Joanne's sake. We were there for my sake.

I learned the things about myself that I didn't know. If you would have asked me before this time, was I prejudiced? I would have said, no, I don't think so. Was I, was I kind? Oh yeah, I'm a kind person.

I thought I was. And in three weeks time, God gave me a love for those people. And a realization that the only difference between them and me was Christ in me, the hope of glory.

The only difference. There is no way that I ever could have co-authored a book on freedom from addiction, or wrote a book on freedom from sexual addictions, if I hadn't been exposed to that and experienced that in my own life. Every book I wrote, every tape I recorded, was all after that.

And it all ended on a day of prayer. And I went down and sat on the campus with the undergraduate students. And if God ever spoke to me, He did there.

He said, Neil, there's a price to pay for freedom. It cost my son his life. He wanted to pay the price.

Let me point out something that I think is critical for us, folks. Brokenness is not just stopping drinking. Brokenness is not just stopping a certain amount of sin of any kind in my life.

I mean, that may be necessary, but brokenness is a change of heart. I think anybody that's ever accomplished anything for ministry has gone through some time like that. And you say, why did you have to go through that? I think what God did was He very systematically brought Neil Anderson to the end of his resources so I could discover his.

And I had a lot of them. I had five earned degrees. I think I have a certain amount of gift that God may have given me.

That doesn't do it, folks. God uses those things, but that's not what does it. It's the grace of God in all of us that brings that about.

I wouldn't have planned this. Had I known 15 years ago what my family would have gone through for me to be here today, I wouldn't have come this way. I'm not a martyr.

I didn't sign up for that. I don't like pain. But I can look back and tell you I'm glad I came, that the will of God is good, acceptable, perfect.

I wouldn't change a thing. I wouldn't change a thing. I don't always know what's in my own heart, but thank God He gave me a new one.

Most of my goodness could be explained because of the fact that I was raised on a nice farm with good parents and never smoked and never drank. That's tragic, folks. Righteousness is not an absence of

things that you do wrong.

It's the presence of God. I hope you're not coming, folks, to this conference to learn how to manipulate spirits. I hope you're coming to affect deep repentance in people's lives so they can renew their mind to the truth of the world that we're living in, could substantially submit to God and then learn to resist the devil so they don't go back and pick up the garbage again and so they can get on with their lives.

I love the little verse in 2 Thessalonians. It says, May the Lord direct your hearts into God's love and Christ's perseverance. Isn't that a neat verse? May the Lord direct your hearts into God's love and Christ's perseverance.

The test of a man's character is what does it take to stop him. The pressures of life don't break you. They reveal who you are.

And when that comes, you can choose pride or humility. Choose humility. Humble yourself before God.

If you have to sit in that circle for three weeks, well, do it. Learn the lesson that God wants you to learn and you'll come out of it a different person. There's a story, and I'm going to close with this, of a missionary couple who spent 50 years in Africa.

They gave their life to the service of God. And now their life was coming to an end. They were going home for the last time.

In those days, when people went over, they may have gone over for 20 years. I don't know how many times they ever had a chance to come back. No communication.

They were alone, themselves and God. But 50 years, they faithfully served the Lord in Africa. In those days, coming home was a matter of sailing on a ship.

When they first went to England and they caught one of the queen's ships. And to their surprise, the queen was on board. She was visiting the country.

As they pulled into the New York Harbor, they had old tugboats out there with water cannons going off to celebrate the arrival of the queen. And of course, because she was on board, there was a Navy band to greet them there. And they rolled out a red carpet and all the rest of the passengers had to wait until that whole entourage left.

Then first class could go, and the second class. And of course, as missionaries, they were third class. And they were standing on the railing as they watched all of the streamers being thrown off the ship.

And finally, as the queen left and the first class left, the band left, the banners were gone. And just in a moment of reflection, he said, look at honey, there's nobody there to greet us, to welcome us home. And his wise wife looked at him and said, honey, you're not home yet.

Learn the perseverance of Christ, because you're not home yet. Let's pray. Father, thank you for your love.

There may be some incredibly hard days ahead for people in here. May we have the perseverance of the saints that would endure to the end. No surface Christianity, no surface revivals, Lord.

But Father, give us the depth that we need to be firmly rooted in Christ, that we can become all that you've created us to be. And we'll thank you for it in Jesus name. Amen.

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