

A Message for Reformed Christian Rappers

by Paul Washer

The sermon emphasizes the importance of truth in music and the need to rediscover the gospel of Jesus Christ in order to truly experience salvation and ongoing growth in our lives.

Duration: 54:30

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, John 3:16, Romans 3:23, Romans 6:23, 2 Corinthians 5:17, 1 Peter 1:15-16, 1 John 2:6

Topics: "Rapping"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of the gospel message in scripture. He highlights the need to disciple lost people and shares an example of a man who was on the verge of death and desperately seeking salvation. The preacher challenges the common approach of leading people through a series of steps and instead emphasizes the power of preaching the gospel and calling for repentance and belief. He shares how he spent hours with the dying man, going through scripture and praying until the man finally understood and accepted the message of salvation.

Transcript

I am not given to flattery. I believe that flattery is a sin, a dark sin that does no help to the hearer. But I have met with men in the last two days that were men who did not so much have a passion for a style of music as they had a passion for God and the truth of God.

And everything without that, absolutely everything that would be done here would be vanity and foolish and useless. But the fact of the matter is, some of the words that I heard spoken here in the songs were truth. The type of truth that this country needs, the type of truth this world needs, the type of truth that the church needs.

I came here thinking that I would hear hip-hop. I came here thinking that I would hear rappers. I heard preaching.

I heard preaching. And I heard a respect for the truth and a desire to communicate it. I especially appreciate it for those of my generation who might wander off the street unknowingly and coming to a place like this.

I appreciated the words being put on the screen. Because then even I could understand. I would call what's going on here something that I use quite frequently, the Gideon's call.

It seems that God will take the least expected thing and use it for a mighty thing. My whole life has been based on that. God taking the runt of the litter.

God taking that which is not, that which is despised, that which is unable, and using it and filling it with the power of God. Let's look at this for a moment. Every one of us who is Christian was found by God to be vile.

And our best works were nothing more than filthy rags. But he saved us, and he cleaned us, and he uses us as instruments for his glory in such a way that even angels long to trade places with us. The art form you're doing here, what is it known for in the world? It is known for sin and immorality.

It is known to be vile and to cause destruction. But yesterday and today, I saw the same thing happen to a music form that has happened to my life. God has taken it, cleaned it off, made it new, and filled it with life.

But let me give you a warning that's very important. As a preacher, I know this. Whenever eloquence is more important than the word spoken, there is no power.

And whenever a music medium becomes more important than the truth it seeks to communicate, it's useless. Now, I didn't see that here. I stayed up last night till almost three in the morning with a group of men, and I was absolutely amazed.

I couldn't even sleep this morning because I was saying, Lord, what a privilege it was for me to be in midst of a group of young men that you're raising up that believe the ancient ways. Now, if Jonathan Edwards were to come back from the dead and see some of these guys, he would probably be afraid. But they're saying the exact same truth, and they're speaking to a people that Spurgeon could not reach and Edwards could not reach, Whitfield could not reach.

I applaud what's being done here. I came here only to be a spectator, to see, God, are you in any of this? But in the hearts of the men and the words of the music, I am greatly, greatly encouraged. I'll only warn you, it is so hard to be a true preacher of the gospel, and it is so hard to live out the truth that we proclaim to others.

But that is the task. For every one of you who rap, for every one of you involved in this, you have a special stewardship from God. You must be holy.

You must follow Him. Don't you know that because of what you're doing, people, even good Christians, are waiting and looking for you to fall. They're looking for you to do something that will prove that this was not a medium chosen by God.

So you have to live beyond and above reproach. You have to live what you're proclaiming. Now, tonight I want to look at a text that's very, very important, and I'm going to bring it in since I'm going to use kind of a shotgun approach here tonight because I've only got one time with you, and I want to say a lot of things.

I just want to read from a text in 2 Corinthians 13, 5. Paul is speaking to the church in Corinth, and he says, test yourselves to see if you are in the faith. Examine yourselves, or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you unless indeed you fail the test? Paul was coming to a church in which many of the members were living like carnal men. They were living like lost men.

Nowhere in this text does Paul just assume that they are all saved. They're just not living like it. Paul comes to them, and this is a weighty matter for him.

You're not living as Christians, which means you just might not be Christian. In the United States of America, we have developed a doctrine. It's the doctrine of the continuously carnal Christian, that a man can truly be a believer and yet live his entire life without growing in holiness or growing in a passion for God.

And I want you to know that's a modern day invention of the American Evangelical Church, and it's not found in Scripture, and nor is it found in church history. Look what we have done. We are preaching false doctrine.

We have taken the gospel of Jesus Christ and reduced it down to four spiritual laws, or five things God wants you to know. And if we can get someone to say yes to every one of our questions, then in the end we pronounce them born again. And that's why we have what we have out there in the streets today.

And then when most of these guys die, after spending a lifetime of selling drugs, living in carnality, alcoholism, fornication, whatever, spending a lifetime doing those things, they will get a Christian burial from a pastor who will declare to all their friends he's going to heaven because when he was nine years old, he prayed a prayer and asked Jesus to come into his heart. Is that not true? It's true. The gospel, we need to understand this, the people in America are not so much hardened to the gospel as they are ignorant of the gospel because the preachers are ignorant of the gospel.

In order for a revival to truly occur or a reformation to truly occur, we must rediscover the gospel of Jesus Christ. Look at what we've done. We walk up to someone and say, do you know you're a sinner? If they say yes, then we go to the next question.

Would you like to go to heaven? If they say yes, then we say, well, would you like to pray and ask Jesus Christ to come into your heart? If they say yes, we lead them in a prayer. Many times they can't even pray it themselves. So we repeat the prayer and they repeat the prayer.

And then we ask them, were you sincere? And if they say yes, we say, well, you're saved. Or a person may come to us in the church who says, you know, I don't know if I'm saved. I've been struggling with this.

And the preacher will say, well, let me ask you a question. Was there ever a point in time in your life when you asked Jesus Christ to come into your heart? And if the person says yes, then the preacher goes, well, were you sincere? If the person says, well, I think so, then the preacher says, well, you're saved. And this is just the devil bothering you.

Find that for me in the New Testament. Find any of that for me in the New Testament. Find our way of evangelizing in the New Testament and find our way of giving people assurance in the New Testament.

You will not be able to do it. Because, see, let's just go back for a moment to these questions. Do you know you're a sinner? If they say yes, that means nothing.

We are a culture. We are a people who drink down iniquity like it was water. We laugh at sin.

We promote sin. We use sin to sell our products. We're all about sin.

Go ask the devil if he's a sinner. He'll say, well, yes, I am. And a mighty fine one at that.

Thank you very much. The question is not, do you know you're a sinner? The question is, as I have been preaching the gospel to you, has God so worked in your heart that the sin you once loved you now hate? That's the question. Has God done a supernatural work in the heart? Has he done anything? Never forget, salvation is not merely a human decision.

It is a manifestation of the power of God on par with the very creation of the universe. So the question is not, do you know you're a sinner? The question is, has God so worked in your heart that you begin to hate the sin you once loved? Now the question is for you. Do you hate sin? Now, I'm not asking you, are you perfect? I'm not asking you, do you ever sin? Yes, you do.

Even the most sincere Christian, even the most genuine convert sins. We will struggle with sin all the days of our life. But has the core attitude of your heart changed with regard to sin? People will come to me all the time and say, Brother Paul, I have a new relationship with God.

And I'll say, well, do you have a new relationship with sin? Because if you don't have a new relationship with sin, you don't have a new relationship with God. Has your heart changed? That the sin you once loved, you now hate. The sin you once boasted about, you now mourn about.

And you are ashamed. That is the question. And then the next question, do you want to go to heaven? Have you ever had someone say, why no, I'd rather go to hell? That's why I would not let my child near most people who do child evangelism.

They get a group of children in a school room or a vacation Bible school. How many of you children love Jesus? Again, how many children stand up and go, no, I hate him and I wish he was crucified. They all go, I love Jesus.

He's the one we colored about in the coloring book. He's a really nice guy. How many of you little children want to go to heaven? Oh, I do, I do.

Okay, how many of you little children want to pray and pray this prayer? Me, me, me. Okay, you're saved. Where did that come from? It comes from people who no longer care about doctrine or theology or truth.

Maybe they care more about numbers. Maybe they're misguided. The question is not, do you want to go to heaven? Everybody wants to go to heaven.

They just don't want God to be there when they get there. Several years ago, a film came out with Robin Williams playing a doctor. He's an agnostic.

He dies. He wakes up in heaven. Of course, in Hollywood, everyone goes to heaven except Christians.

So he goes to heaven and he meets an angel. And he said, well, there's a heaven. And the angel said, well, yeah, you're standing in it.

He said, well, if there's a heaven, is there a God? And the angel said, well, of course. And Robin Williams said, well, where is he? And the angel said, he's up there. Now look what that means.

We don't want God on earth. And now we get to heaven, which we want. But we don't want God there either.

You see, the question is not, do you want to go to heaven? You know, I lived a lot of my life in the jungles and in the rice fields in Peru. When they burn off a rice field after the harvest, every venomous snake in the world runs out of that field. But it's still a venomous snake.

It's not changed. It's only trying to save its skin. All men want to go to heaven.

All men want to avoid hell. But it's primarily for self-idolatry and self-preservation. Every man wants a utopia.

That's what all these different forms of government are about. Men trying to build a utopia on earth. Everyone wants to go to heaven.

So that's not the question. The question is this, not do you want to go to heaven, but the God that you have spent your life ignoring, rebelling against, even hating. Since you have heard the gospel of Jesus Christ, has your heart so changed that you now desire him? You want him.

You love him. Christ, has he become precious to you? I literally hate church signs that call Jesus a key to heaven. He's not a key.

He's the son of God. What we need to understand is that when someone is truly converted and the Holy Spirit is working, there will be a real and genuine change in the heart. It doesn't mean that a moment a person is born again, they're automatically mature.

But it does mean essentially at the very core of their being, they have become a new creature with new desires. Let me give you an example. Down in the south in the Bible Belt, you find someone on the church list who hasn't been in church for five years.

And so you go up to his house and you knock on the door. He was raised right. Very polite man puts his head down.

He sees you coming. You open up the door. He says, pastor, come on in.

And you begin to talk to him, you know, you haven't been in church for years and you know you're known to be drinking a lot and to be even committing immorality and your marriage is terrible and and you need to repent and you need to get back in church and all these different things. And the person looks at you and says with their head down, you're right, pastor, you're right. I need to stop drinking and I need to stop going to all those taverns and I need to stop womanizing and you're right.

I need to I need to just read the Bible and I need to just be disciplined and go to church. Do you know what you're seeing? You're seeing a lost man. You're looking at a man who you think, oh, my goodness, he's turning back to the Lord.

No, he's not. Do you know what he's telling you? He's telling you this, pastor, you're right. I need to stop doing all the wicked things I love and start doing all the righteous things I hate so that I can go to heaven.

That's what you're hearing. You see, if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature. It doesn't say if some men are in Christ, they're new creatures.

It doesn't say a certain percentage of the body of Christ is going to be spiritual and the rest are going to be carnal. No, it says everyone who is truly in Christ at the very core of their being is a new creature. Now,

some grow faster than others, some make greater progress in the things of God.

Some people's progress are more evident than others. We all know that sometimes the Christian life is two step forwards and three steps back and five steps forward. But never be mistaken, it is impossible to be embraced by the gospel of Jesus Christ and not be changed.

And it is impossible to be changed at the very core of your being and it not be manifest to those around you. So many people, maybe even people here today, you've bought into a lie. One time in your life, you prayed a prayer as though salvation was an injection or a vaccination.

I did that already. Don't worry about me. I've got that done.

I repented a long time ago. I believed a long time ago. But the evidence that you truly repented under salvation a long time ago is that you're still repenting today.

And the evidence that you truly believed a long time ago unto salvation is that you're truly believing today that he who began a good work at you finishes it, finishes it. So the question is not, do you want to go to heaven? The question is, has God so worked in your heart that the God you hated you now esteem and desire? And then if someone says, yes, I know I'm a sinner. Yes, I want to go to heaven.

Then here's the famous. All of you at the sound of my voice who want to go to heaven, raise your hand. I see the hand.

Now, while this is going on, the choir has been instructed to play certain music. Not only that, but the evangelist has placed people, believers throughout the congregation or the auditorium who are known that when they know that when the evangelist raises their hand and gives the invitation there to come forward to make it easier for unbelievers to come forward. That is psychological manipulation.

It is not the power of God. And it's what has to be done today in America because truth is not being preached and the power of the Holy Spirit is not being manifested in the lives of men. We do told us this stuff.

Where did we get this? How could we have such a low view of the gospel of Jesus Christ that we have to manipulate men psychologically to get them to come down and pray a prayer? But if they do come down. How many times have I heard evangelists say it'll only take five minutes? No, my dear friend, it'll take your life, all of it. Well, we're just lowering, you know, we're just trying to attract people and then we'll gradually bring them in further and further.

That is what the cults do. That's not what Jesus did. Notice that in the gospels, every time a great crowd is following Jesus, he turns around and says something so radical to them that most of them walk away.

Of course, Jesus probably would not get invited to teach evangelism. Can you show me in the New Testament? I've challenged theologians and preachers and scholars and those who are no scholar. Can you show me where this configuration that's used every day to supposedly lead people to Christ can be found in the scriptures? They'll turn to Romans 10.

But in doing so, they totally twist the passage out of context. If someone calls on the name of the Lord by faith, will they be saved? Absolutely. But the mere fact that we got someone to come down an aisle and repeat a prayer, does that mean that's what they've done? No.

Now, the evidence of true conversion is not simply that one time in your life you made a decision and you believe that you were sincere. That's only part of what the preacher ought to look at. But the next question is this.

The profession of faith, has it continued on? Have you grown since then? Is God a reality in your life? Is it obvious that he who began a good work in you is finishing it? How is it, my dear friend? There are some people here tonight that if they were to hint a white lie, if they were to say something off colored, if they were to look where they were not supposed to look, if they were to do something they were not supposed to do or even move in that direction, the Holy Spirit would so crush their heart, they would be brought to repentance and confession. Is that not true? Is that not true in some of your lives? How many times is just doing one little thing the Holy Spirit has so dealt with you that you thought you were literally going to die until you confessed? And yet countless people, even now, while I am speaking, millions of people all over this country can live in a continuous state of carnality without the least voice of the Holy Spirit convicting them of sin. Why is that? It's because they're not saved.

They're not converted. You see, in my country, Peru, where I live for so many years, most of the people believe themselves saved because one time in their life they were baptized as infants. We look at that and say, well, that's wrong.

But can't you see we're doing the same thing, the exact same thing? Countless Americans say they're going to heaven even though they live in wickedness, carnality, without any care for God, because one time in their life they prayed a prayer with a well-meaning evangelical. We have taken the gospel of Jesus Christ and reduced it down to nothing. What is the gospel called? It is repent of your sins and believe the gospel.

What is the task of the evangelist? It is to preach the gospel clearly and then to invite men to Christ, but to go with them through the scriptures, to seek to help them through the power of the Holy Spirit and the word of God, to discern whether or not they've truly come to salvation. Not five minutes of talk so that we can all go to Denny's and then brag about how many people got saved. But a continuing work.

Do you know why discipleship is so much a failure in America? Because we're trying to make goats act like sheep. We're discipling lost people because we did that. Look at this.

The gospel is the most important message in all of scripture, even in scripture. And the scriptures are so important that the dust of the Bible is gold. But of the Bible, the one great message is the gospel, and we share it in two minutes and then try to go for the sale.

When someone comes, let me give you some examples. Someone comes to me and said, Brother Paul, God, I heard the message. OK, praise the Lord.

Sam, what did you hear? Well, I heard that I'm a sinner and I can see that I'm so vile, I'm just I'm lost. OK, good. What has God done for you? Well, God sent his son.

I believe that I can see it. I want him. Believe.

Well, how am I supposed to do that? Well, let's go through scripture. Let's go through the promises of God and the promises of God. Let's pray together.

Some people come forward sometimes and in two minutes they're down saying, oh, God, save me. And they rise up with such a joy in their heart. But sometimes it takes days, weeks, months of dealing with a man, of going with a man through scripture.

But let's say that a person comes forward and a person is out there with us in a park somewhere and they say, yes, I believe. I believe he saved me today. You should say, praise God.

But then. Then you should say, now, listen to me very clearly. If you have indeed repented of your sins and believed God has saved you.

But the evidence that you have truly repented and believed unto salvation is that you will continue repenting and believe. And God and his Christ will become dear to you and you will begin to walk and to grow. Yes, it will be a struggle and sometimes you will fail.

But over the course of your life, you will begin to grow in holiness and holiness. You will grow in holiness without which no man will see the Lord. The evidence that you were truly converted today is that you will continue on.

If only most of the Americans had been told that they would not be resting in false security today. Even though the most famous evangelist in the world said, if even five percent of all the people who've made decisions at my meetings are saved, I would be pleased. Why didn't he tell them that? If you look, I'm older than most of you, but still, as far as men of God go, I'm young, I'm forty five.

You say, what right do you have to stand up and say that much of the evangelism that's going on in America is doing more harm than good? Well, you need to understand something about the hermeneutics that you've been studying. There's one principle of hermeneutics that says you should always do your theology in the context of the church. That means when you believe something to be right in Scripture, you should go through church history.

Have men and women of God down through the ages believed the same thing? And if you look at our evangelism and our methods of evangelism and our methods of church growth, you won't find them in church history. But most importantly, you will find them in Scripture. To be used of God.

You must be someone who is ultimately concerned above everything else about the glory of God. And you must be ultimately concerned with proclaiming his truth instead of a fragmented, romantic version of the gospel that's been truncated and is now long it is no longer powerful. I remember a while back I was preaching just a few kilometers south of Alaska in British Columbia.

And as I got up in the pulpit, the back doors of the church, a little church opened up and a giant of a man walked through the door, saddest looking man I've ever seen in my life. And he sat down on the front row and I began to preach the gospel. And after I preached the gospel to him, I came down, I went straight to him.

I said, Sir, you're the saddest human being I've ever seen in my life. What's going on in your life? And he pulled out a manila envelope with an X-ray, which I couldn't tell anything from it. He says, I'm going to die in three weeks.

I've lived all my life out on a working cattle ranch. The only way you can get there is by going over the mountains on horseback or float plane. I'm going to die in three weeks.

I've never been in a church in my life. I believe that there's a God. One time I heard someone talk about some guy named Jesus.

I've never been afraid of anything, but I'm going to die and I'm terrified. I said, Sir, did you understand the gospel? And this is what he said. Yes.

Is that it? What would most people have said? Yeah. Now pray this prayer. I said, no, sir, that's not it.

Sir, what about sin in your life? I said, just sin. I said, what about a desire for God? No, but I'm scared and I don't know what's going to happen to me. So I went through the gospel again and I said, sir, here's what we're going to do.

We're going to spend. I've got to leave tomorrow, I said on the plane. I'll cancel the plane tickets.

You're going to die in three weeks. So we've got three weeks. We will sit here because faith cometh by hearing.

And we will go through scripture and we will pray and we will go through scripture until either God has soundly saved you or you are dead and in hell. And so we began. We started in the Old Testament and went through the scriptures of God's grace and salvation to those who believe.

After about an hour and a half, I said, sir, do you understand these things? He said, yes, I do. Nothing else. We prayed, we started again, we work, we went through the time passed.

And after a while, about midnight, I said, sir, read John 3, 16 again. He said, well, I've read it a million times. I said, I know, read it again.

Let's pray. We pray. Sir, read the text.

He looked down. I'll never forget those big hands. And he said, OK, for God so loved the world.

And then he went, I'm saved, I'm saved. All my sins are gone. They've all been taken away.

I have eternal life. Oh, God, I'm saved. I'm saved.

And he just began to go through all the texts and all the verses declaring I've been saved. I said, sir, how do you know that? He said, haven't you ever read John 3, 16? Now, it was very truncated version of what actually happened. The point that I'm making is you see what went on.

Spend enough time working with the man using the scriptures. Waiting for obvious evidences of conversion, of repentance, of brokenness, of desire for God. And then, believe it or not, that waiting upon God gave time for the Holy Spirit to work in the life of that man.

And he was reborn. He just didn't make a decision. Look at all our evangelism day of decision, hour of decision.

Do you realize that most people in America are trusting in a decision they made a long time ago and they're not looking to Christ at all? The heresy of decisionism. Lady came to me a few years ago. She came forward and she was weeping.

I knew something about her life from her parents. And she says, I need to be saved. I said, how many times have you known that? She said, six.

I said, how many times have you prayed that prayer and asked Jesus to come into your heart? She said, six. I said, well, it didn't do any good, did it? She said, no. She said, preacher, what do I do? I said, go home.

Go home and cry out to God until he saves you. She went home. She cried out to God all night.

She came back to church the next evening in absolute despair. I said, what happened? She said, I cried out to God all night and he did nothing. OK, you've got two choices.

Continue crying out to God until he saves you or stop. But if you stop, if you stop, there is no salvation. She went home and cried out to God.

The next night at church, I was praying with her father. We were weeping. The music began to start.

I sat up in the seat where I was supposed to be sitting before I preached. And all of a sudden I felt someone plop down beside me. And it was that lady.

She was just glowing. I said, sister, what's going on? She said, I cried out to God all night last night in absolute despair. Then this morning I woke up and God shed abroad his love in my heart and he saved me.

You see, we're so we have been so taught to do something that's not even been found in history. It's not found in scripture. We've been taught to take people from one step to another step to another step and finally to get them to do something.

And if they do something, we pronounce them safe instead of preaching the gospel and standing forth and crying out. God commands that all men everywhere repent and believe the gospel and then wait on the power of God with biblical counseling and discernment. And because we do not do that, we have countless people walking.

How many of your converts are walking with God? How many of all the people you've led to the Lord? I'm walking with God today. Yet, did you pronounce them saved and do they still believe it now? I got off into something I really did not want to do, but I want to do just quickly. Just a few things.

I want you to go for a moment to 1st John. What is the evidence that someone has truly believed under salvation? What is the evidence that a person is truly Christian? He says, these things I have written unto you, believe in the name of son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life. And the book of 1st John is a series of tests.

And if someone comes to us or after someone has made a profession of faith in Jesus Christ, it is good that we go through these things with them so that they can begin to discern what true salvation really is. John gives us a series of tests in 1st John, and I want to go through them briefly. In 1st John, chapter one, verse five, this is the message we have heard from him and announced to you that God is light and in him there is no darkness at all.

If we say that we have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. Now, when it says that God is light, it means much more here than just that God is holy. There was a

sect, a group, a heretical group that were the roots of Gnosticism.

That were teaching that God was a dark, esoteric God that no one could know. But John comes and he says, no, God is light. God has revealed to us who he is and he has revealed to us something about his will.

We know him and we know his will. God is light. He's not a hidden God.

And then he says this. Anyone who professes to have faith in Jesus Christ, to have fellowship with God and yet walks in the darkness is lying. Now, what does it mean to walk in the darkness? It means this.

First of all, to walk in this context, to walk around means a style of life. And what he's saying is this. Anyone who says they have fellowship with God, they've come to know him.

And yet their style of life contradicts what we know about the character of God and contradicts what we know about the will of God. They are lying in their profession of faith. Now, let me give you a little bit more on the style of life.

If you were to follow me around with a snapshot camera that only had one photo and you waited long enough, it wouldn't take long until you saw me sinning. You snapped the picture and then you went back to the church and said, see, here's a picture of Paul Washer sinning. He's not a Christian.

Well, that's not a very. It's not very accurate. You have taken one moment out of my life and snapped a picture.

But if you were to follow me around for weeks and even months with a video camera and video the full course of my life, now that would be more accurate. And that is what the Apostle John is speaking of. Anyone who claims to be a Christian and yet their style of life.

Over a normal period of time. Reflects a lifestyle, their way of living reflects a lifestyle that contradicts what we know about the character of God and contradicts what we know about the will of God. That person can have no assurance that they've ever been born again.

Then he goes on and he has another text in 1st John, chapter one, verse eight, if we say that we have no sin and we are just we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us, if we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar and his word is not in us. What is he saying? The first test is this.

A genuine Christian will walk in a style of life that conforms itself to the character and will of God. The second test is this. The genuine Christian will be sensitive about the sin in their life.

The Holy Spirit will convict them of that sin and bring them to confession. The true Christian, their life is not marked by perfection, but it is marked by brokenness over sin and confession. Let me give you an example.

And some of you have seen this in your own churches, possibly preacher gets up to preach and the Holy Spirit begins to work in an unusual way. People start weeping, possibly over their sin. Maybe in your church they come forward or something and are kneeling and praying.

Have you ever seen that happen? I hope so. Isn't it amazing that when that happens, it's almost always the case that the most devoted and most dedicated people in the church are the ones who pass forward weeping over their sin and confessing it. And the most carnal, wicked people in the church sit in the back row with their hearts as cold as a stone, not seeing anything of their sin.

Do you know what you're seeing? The difference between the saved and the lost in that particular congregation. One of the marks of genuine Christianity is not sinless perfection. Never buy into that.

But there is a great difference. And some of you know exactly what I'm talking about. That when you sin, the Holy Spirit causes you to mourn and brings you to confession.

That is not the mark of being lost. It's the mark of being saved. The reality of God in your life, that you cannot escape him.

He's everywhere. He hems you in. He comes from the bottom.

He comes from the top. He puts around you a cage with his presence. If you were to cast yourself in the bottom of the sea, you could not escape the conviction of his Holy Spirit.

If you were to try to pass the heavens, you would find him there still marking out your sin until you confess it. If that is a reality in your life, then bless God. That is a mark of Christianity.

But if you can live a life that continuously contradicts what the Scriptures teach about the character of God and the will of God without confession, without the Holy Spirit convicting you, without God disciplining you. Not only do you know not God, God knows not you. It's another test goes on in chapter two, verse six.

The one who says he abides in him ought himself to walk in the same manner as he walked. And so, well, then, Brother Paul, we're all going to hell. No, but what does this mean? That someone who truly knows Christ, when you look at their style of life, you will see their heart and their lifestyle inclined to following Jesus.

Their great goal will be to be like Christ. Now, let me give you an illustration from my life. I was born, we raised horses and cattle, and my dad would get me up at every morning, about 5:30 in the morning.

Matter of fact, the first Bible verse I ever learned was, Paul, boy, get up. There's no rest for the wicked. That's what my dad used to tell me every morning.

And so he would get me up and we would go out and feed the cattle. Now, sometimes there'd be a heavy snow on the ground. My father was a very big man and I wanted to be like him so much.

He was so strong and smart. And so my father would grab a bucket in each hand and take out walking across the feedlot. And of course, as he walked, there would be footprints in the snow.

And as a little boy, I would grab one bucket with one hand and another bucket with another. And then what would I do? I would try to put my feet in the very place he walked. Now, if anyone from the outside was looking upon it, they would see a rather ridiculous looking young man, a young man trying to stretch out and be something he cannot be, a man slipping, young man slipping and sliding and falling and unable to walk exactly like his father walked.

But in spite of all that, by looking at my life, there is one thing that would have been sure to them. That little boy wants to be just like his dad. The question is, when people look at you, what do they see? Do they see a person who wants to be just like Christ? Yes, a person slipping and sliding and failing and falling.

But a person that no doubt when you look at their life, the manner of their lifestyle, you look at that, you say there's no doubt they want to be like Christ. You ever talk to them? I mean, all they talk about is Jesus. They've got all these Jesus books and they're hanging around Jesus people and they're doing all these Jesus things.

They want to be like Jesus. That is another mark of Christianity. The first being this, that you will walk in the light.

You will live in such a way that conforms in ever greater degree to the image of God's character and to his will. You will also be sensitive about sin. You will not be without sin.

We will struggle with it. But when we do sin, the Holy Spirit will not set us free until we're brought to confession. And then the desire or the inclination of our life will be this.

We will want to be like Jesus. I'm going to give you one more test, even though this book is full of them. And it is this, in chapter two, verse nine, he says, the one who says he is in the light and yet hates his brother is in the darkness until now.

The one who loves his brother abides in the light and there is no cause for stumbling in him. But the one who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness and does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes. One of the greatest evidences of true conversion is that you love the people of God.

Now, this is not about loving someone of a different race, because according to Scripture, there's only one race. It's a human race. This is not about loving just the four.

The term brother here is referring to loving another person who professes faith in Jesus Christ. Who do you want to be with? I just asked you in the other text, who do you want to be like? Now I'm asking you, who do you want to be with? Do you love being with people in the world and of the world who love the things of the world, who walk in the world, who desire the world? Or do you love to be with the people of God? I remember before I was a believer, believe it or not, I used to lift a lot of weights and I'd work out in this gym that was right across the church from this back, right across the street from this Baptist church. And every Wednesday, the people would come into the church, be going to church, and I'd throw open all the windows of the gym and play as loud as possible.

A.C.D.C. Highway to Hell. I just hated church people. But if you'd asked me if I was a Christian, I probably said yes.

But when I was saved, I wanted to go to church. I wanted to be with anyone that was in the church. I wanted to be around anyone who talked about Jesus.

I didn't care how old they were. I didn't care who they were. I don't care anything about them, the way they dressed.

I just wanted to be around people who wanted to talk about Christ. Is that you? You say, well, Brother Paul, you can't judge a book by its cover. Who told you that? Jesus didn't say that.

Did you know that? As a matter of fact, he said just the opposite. You will know them by their fruits. Well, Brother Paul, judge not, lest ye be judged.

Twist not scripture, lest ye be like the devil. Because that's not what that means. You, you look like the world.

You're of the world. You say, well, Brother Paul, are you talking about baggy pants and hats turned sideways and all that? No, I'm talking about when you open up your mouth and you walk your walk. Do you talk like Jesus? Do you walk like Jesus? Do you love like Jesus? Do you want to be with the people that Jesus is with? That's the key.

Let me share with you something. You know that passage where Jesus said, I was in prison and you didn't visit me. I was hungry and you didn't feed me.

That's probably one of the most misinterpreted scriptures in the whole Bible. We should have prison ministries, but that's not what that verse is talking about. We should feed the poor, but that's not what that verse is talking about.

You can't just take verses like that. It's not what it means. This is what it means.

Let's say I'm the pastor. You're the congregation. And if it's a biblical church, I'm not the only pastor.

If it's a mature church, there's going to be other pastors. And so here's four of us pastors and we're preaching and doing all the stuff that pastors do. And there's some spies.

We're back in Roman times and there's some spies in the congregation. And they go back to the Roman authorities and they say, you know, these are the four pastors. And so the Roman authorities come in and they grab us and they take us to the prison.

Now, I understand that prisons are bad in America, but you should try prisons in the third world. There were some prisons in Peru where if you were thrown into those prisons, they don't feed you. They don't clothe you.

They don't give you water. If someone doesn't come from the outside and give you food and give you clothing and give you water, you're going to die in that prison. So here's what's going on.

Christians are thrown into prison for their faith. And it just happens to be the four pastors. Now you get together as a congregation and say, what are we going to do if we don't help them? They're going to die.

And if someone stands up, well, that's true. But whoever goes and takes the food and clothing is also going to go to prison. And the true believers in the congregation then stand up and say, well, I'll be the first one to go.

One of the greatest evidences that you're truly converted is real, practical, dying to self service of love to those who profess faith in Jesus Christ. Is that you? Is that you?

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