

Tests of Genuine Conversion

by Paul Washer

The sermon emphasizes the importance of genuine conversion, repentance, and confession in the Christian life, and highlights the difference between saved and lost people.

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Description

In this sermon, the speaker uses a story about a young boy wanting to walk like his father to illustrate the desire of true Christians to be like Jesus. He emphasizes that even though Christians may stumble and make mistakes, their ultimate desire is to follow Jesus. The speaker then challenges the audience to examine the source of their joy, suggesting that if their joy is based on their ability to follow God perfectly, it is misplaced. He concludes by sharing a story about a painting that was mocked and misunderstood, but held great value to a young soldier. The soldier is willing to give everything he has to possess the painting, showing that its true worth is not understood by others.

Transcript

So many people today boast of the security of the believer and once saved, always saved. And there is great truth in those statements. But they have been twisted to allow carnal people to rest in the assurance that they have been saved when, in fact, they have not been saved.

And so we need to deal with this issue. I shared with you this morning in Second Corinthians, chapter five, verse 13, that when Paul came to the church at Corinth, some of them were not acting as Christians. And so he comes to them and he says that they must examine themselves or test themselves to see if they are in the faith.

This goes in agreement with the words of Jesus Christ when he said, you will know them by their fruits, that there are evidences to the Christian faith. But in America today, it's basically it goes somewhat like this. Have you asked Jesus to come into your heart? Yes, I have.

Were you sincere? Yes, I think I was. Well, then he has come in because he's given you that promise and you can know that you're saved and stand upon that decision you have made. In America, there's this idea.

I call it decisionism. Most people, when you talk to them about the gospel or you talk to them about their salvation, you quickly find that they believe that they are saved because they are looking at a decision they made instead of looking unto Jesus. They're trusting in a decision rather than in a person.

Now, how did all this happen? Well, it all happens this way by getting away from Scripture. You can be a Bible thumping fundamentalist, which I have nothing against anyone who's thumping a Bible, but you can be a Bible thumping fundamentalist who says that this book is the word of God and still not preach it. We have developed a church.

Mentality today, the church is about so many things, but it doesn't necessarily have much to do with the word of God and what the scriptures say with regard to genuine conversion. And so we need to get back to that. What is the gospel? What truly happens when someone's saved and how do you know that you are saved? How do you know? They give an example.

We have taken the doctrine of the security of the believer. That's the terminology used in America today. And we have taken the doctrine of assurance and we've combined the two doctrines together and we've lost both of them.

So what you need to understand is this. The doctrine of security. Is simply this, the person who truly believes in Jesus Christ is saved and kept by the power of God, that's the doctrine of security, but there's a doctrine of assurance.

The doctrine of security says the one who believes is saved, but the doctrine of assurance is how do you know you believe? It is true that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord with faith is saved, everyone who believes in Jesus is justified. But how do you know you believe, especially in the context of literally millions of people in America who believe they believe? We could dismiss this church right now and go into every casino in Las Vegas and we would find all sorts of people who believe themselves saved. And why? Because one time in their life they prayed a prayer and asked Jesus to come into their heart.

That's their evidence, their decision. And how sincere they think they were at that moment. But the Bible treats it differently.

How do we know that we are saved? We know we are saved because salvation is a supernatural work of God whereby the very nature of a human being is changed and that nature must manifest itself in a new way of living, a new way of life. In first John, chapter five, verse 13, he says, these things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life. He wrote what is written in this book so that by reading it, you would have a biblical assurance.

The scriptures themselves would testify to the fact that you're saved. So that's what we're going to do tonight. We're going to begin a journey of going through some of the tests that John lays down.

It's a standard, a biblical standard by which you can compare your life and determine, do I really know him? Am I really and truly born again? Now, let's start in chapter one. In chapter one, we come to the first test in 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 darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another in the blood of

Jesus. His son cleanses us from all sin.

Now, in verse five, he says, 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. Now, what does it mean that God is light? Well, for most of us, when we think of God being light and in him there is no darkness at all, it speaks of the holiness, the moral purity of God. There is no sin in God.

He cannot be tempted by sin. But I believe in the context it's saying something different. You see, this church was being bombarded by false teachers that later came to be known as Gnostics and Gnostics taught that one was saved or one had salvation by this dark esoteric knowledge that they comprehended.

And there was just a few of them that truly had a comprehension of this dark knowledge of theirs. And for them, God was kind of dark and hidden and mysterious. You could not know him.

You could not really know his will. And John is coming to them and saying, no, God is light. God has revealed himself to you.

He has told you who he is, character, and he has told you his will. So to these believers, John comes and says, no, God is not dark. God is not hidden.

You do not need a secret knowledge. God has told you who he is and God has explained to you his will. Now, he goes on from there and says in verse six, if we say we have fellowship with him in contemporary Christianity in America, many people have taken this text to mean.

If we say we're in communion with him, as though there could be a genuine Christian who was not walking in communion with God, and they take it to mean that there are believers in the world that some walk in communion with God and others do not walk in communion with God. It's that old thing of spiritual Christian, carnal Christian lost man. We divide up Christianity today or men in three different categories, lost people, carnal Christians and spiritual Christians, lost people, and then Christians where they're sort of on the throne and then Christians where Jesus is on the throne.

But the Bible does not know three categories. It only knows two. And what he's talking about here is not a Christian who may or may not be walking in fellowship.

He's talking about the difference between an unbeliever who does not have fellowship with God and a believer who does. So what he's saying is this, if we say that we have fellowship with him, if we say that we are Christian, if we say that we are born again, if we say that we have salvation, that we're going to heaven. And yet walk in darkness, we lie.

What do we lie about? We lie about our identification with Christ and Christianity. We are not Christian. If we claim fellowship with God and yet walk in darkness, we're lying when we claim fellowship with God.

Now, it's very important here that we understand what it means to walk in darkness, to walk in darkness. Now, as I have said, God is light. He has revealed to us who he is.

And he has revealed to us his will, we know his character and we know his will. To walk in the light is to live in a way that conforms to what we know about God's character and what we know about his will to walk in the darkness is to live in a way that contradicts what Scripture teaches us about the character of God and it contradicts what Scripture teaches us about the will of God. Now, what does it mean to walk?

The word here is peripateo means to walk around.

It's referring to a style of life. Let me give you an example. If you were to follow me around with a Polaroid camera or a camera that just took snapshots and you followed me around long enough, it wouldn't take long.

You could take a picture of me in sin. You could take a picture of me, maybe angry or proud or rude or selfish, you could find something and you could take a picture of it and you could blow it up and put it here on the wall and show everyone Paul Washer is not a Christian. But that snapshot is not a very accurate portrayal of my life, is it? Just by taking one snapshot, you're really not discovering who I really am.

But now, if you followed me around with a video camera for days and weeks and months, now there you would have an accurate description of who I truly am. That's what that's what John is talking about here when he talks about walking. A genuine Christian as a style of life, we're not talking about perfectionism here.

But a genuine Christian, when you look at their style of life, you are going to see. Something different from an unbeliever, and this is what you're going to see, a conformity, they're going to live in a way that conforms to what God has taught us about his nature. They're going to live in a way that conforms to what God has taught us about his will.

Again, we're not talking about perfectionism. We're talking about simply a style of life. And you can see this even in a brand new believer, someone who has truly been born again.

What will happen? Will they be immature? Yes. Will they lack knowledge? Yes, absolutely. Will they stumble in many things? Possibly.

But what will you see? You will see an ever increasing growing into conformity to Jesus Christ in their style of life. It may be two steps forward, one step back, four steps forward, three steps back, two steps forward, five steps back. But you're going to see over a period of time a growth in holiness.

In sanctification being made more and more holy, you see, you need to understand something, man has only two problems. He has a problem with the condemnation of sin. He has another problem with the power of sin.

And since in America we have lost the doctrine of regeneration, we've messed everything up. We believe that God can deal with the first problem. God can save us from the condemnation of sin, because the moment we place our faith in Jesus Christ, God justifies us.

That takes care of the condemnation of sin. But what we have failed to realize is that regeneration is a supernatural work of God. And the person who has trusted in Jesus Christ, the person who has been saved from the condemnation of sin, has also become a new creature, a new creature with a new heart, a new creature.

With a relationship with the Holy Spirit who is going to be given power over sin again, we're not talking about perfectionism, But we are talking about real dramatic change that will increase over one's life. And so that's what we need to see, he says, the first test is the true Christian, their style of life will be marked by conformity to the character of God and conformity to the will. Now, is that evident in your life? You see, it doesn't matter if I say, do you agree? The real question is, is it a reality in your life since you have

professed faith in Jesus Christ? Have you noticed a reality of the working of God in which little by little, more and more, he is cutting away all the things in your life? That do not conform to his character and his will, and he is leading you into greater conformity to his character and will.

Sometimes a great struggle, sometimes you walk willingly, sometimes there's need of discipline by the Holy Spirit or even the hand of God in a way that may physically touch your body or change the circumstances of your life. But you almost seem imprisoned that God has captured you for himself and he is doing a work that's going to be done. Can you see that in your life? Well, that would be great.

That can give you great assurance to know, because he who began a good work and you will finish it, can you see this? But maybe you cannot see this. There is no evidence or reality of God working in your life to change you, then you ought to be very afraid, extremely afraid. Now, let's go on to the next test.

Verse eight of chapter one, if we say that we have no sin, 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 that we have not sinned, we make him a liar and his word is not in us.

Now, the first test was this. The genuine Christian, their life will be marked by a style of life that conforms to the character of God and the will of God. The second test is this, the genuine Christian.

Will be sensitive. To the sin in their life. It will bring about repentance in their life and a confession of that sin to both God and men.

One of the greatest evidences that you have truly become Christian is not that you have become perfect, but that when you sin, you are convicted by the Holy Spirit, you mourn over that sin and you are brought to confess that sin and confess. And means this to speak the same thing. When the Holy Spirit convicts you of a certain specific sin, you confess that sin when you say, God, what you are saying to me, I agree with and I say the same thing.

Many people today believe that confession is simply asking God to forgive you of all your sins at night before you go to bed. That's not confession that's asking for forgiveness. Confession, homologos is to speak the same thing.

God speaks to you a word through his word about a certain specific sin in your life and you speak back to God, what you say about me is true. I confess it and I repent. And be careful here, when my wife first came to this country, she said this, she said, the one thing I notice about American Christians more than anything is they are so thin skinned.

You can't tell them anything without them becoming angry and leaving the church. So be very careful, because it might not be God through the preaching of the word or your reading of the word that points out sin in your life. It might be a pastor who points out sin in your life.

It might be a fellow believer who cares about you and has noticed things in your life that should not be. Will you submit to that? Will you humble yourself before that? Or will you straighten up your back and stiffen your neck and walk away in your self-righteous pride and go straight to hell? You see, one of the greatest marks of true Christianity is that we are a confessional people. Blessed are those who mourn for they shall be comforted.

Blessed are those who look at their life. And they loathe even some of their activity and some of their ways, but it causes them to hope in Christ and Christ alone. Blessed are those people, for they shall be comforted with a great work of God.

Today, in modern day evangelism, we want people to be saved without the mourning. And if we see someone mourning, we immediately want to run up to them and comfort them and give comfort and say, peace, peace to someone whom God does not want to have comfort. I was preaching several years ago in a church in Tennessee, and they had all these counselors prepared and everything, which is always a bad sign.

They had all these counselors ready for the people who are going to come forward. And God began to move and people began to weep. And even before I got through preaching, people started because in the South, this is often very popular.

People started passing forward and crying out on the steps and things. And there was this lady who was in charge of all the counselors and she did not like me. And so she looked up at me and she said, should we go? I said, no.

I kept talking and all of a sudden I realized she's going to bolt on me, she's going to do it anyway. So I go down there, I stood beside her and she just looked at me and all these people weeping and crying. And one girl was on the platform just almost hysterical about her sin.

And she was just looking at me like, you hateful man, why don't you let us comfort these people? And she took one step forward and I put my hand on her shoulder and I said, don't touch the ark of God. It is God who is wounding these people. Leave it alone.

God will wound them. God will heal them. And he did.

He did. Blessed are those who mourn. Blessed are those who mourn.

We're about the God of self-esteem and the idolatry of self-realization and everything else. Don't we realize we are a broken, fallen people? No. And the reality of sin is so grotesque before a holy God and his throne.

And when we sin, it is a terrible thing. And if we are an unbeliever, we cannot see it. But even believers today have trouble seeing it because it is so infrequently preached.

The terrible reality, or as the Puritans used to say, the sinfulness of sin needs to be brought home to us so that we will mourn. But if we are believers, we do not mourn unto despair. It's not a repentance unto death.

But that mourning eventually turns into joy as we look upon Christ. As we look upon Christ, let me ask you a question. When was the last time you mourned over your sin? When was the last time God struck your heart as a man ringing a bell? About inconsistencies in your in your way of being, in your way of acting.

How hard is our heart become? You see, the Christian life is something like. In order to come to know the Lord, you're standing there, you're blind to all spiritual realities, you know, not God. The Gospels preach the spirit of God regenerates your heart for the first time in your life.

You look upon God and his holiness. You look upon self and sin with disgust. But you're not left in despair because with that revelation of God's holiness, with that revelation of your sin comes a revelation of the

grace of God in the face of Christ.

You're irresistibly drawn to him and you fall in to his salvation. But as you begin to grow in Christ, the same thing happens over and over as you walk with Christ, there are greater and greater revelations of who God is. If you're studying the scriptures, there's greater revelation of who God is.

But then there's greater revelation of your sinfulness. But you're not left in despair because there's greater revelation of the grace of Christ. So eventually what happens? You come to the end of your days, an old, broken man who puts no confidence whatsoever in the flesh and yet has more joy than it can even be described because you're looking on to Christ and to Christ alone.

Now. It's amazing, and pastors usually are able to pick up on this immediately when I say it. It is amazing that so often when I have preached over the years, the Holy Spirit may begin to work and start breaking people of their sin or a pastor, you know, is preaching from the pulpit one Wednesday night or something, and God just begins to do an unusual work in the hearts of people and people begin to weep over their sin.

Isn't it amazing that it's always almost always the most pious, dedicated, godly people in the church who are weeping over their sin? And the most wicked, carnal, cold people in that building sit there as though not one as though they had not one sin among them. What are we seeing? We're seeing the difference between the saved and the lost. That's what we're seeing.

The difference between God working in his people and God not working in those who are not his people, that's what we're seeing. So I want you to be encouraged, have you ever Christian, have you ever just mourned over your sin? Have you ever just said to yourself, I feel like I'm not even growing? Have you ever just thought, oh, Lord. Who will save me from this body of death and cried out to Christ and struggled against sin? Well, then rejoice, rejoice.

There's hope for you. It's a good mark that you've truly come to know him. It's a good mark that you've truly come to know him.

You know, people will come to me all the time, they said, Brother Paul, I got a new relationship with God and I'll always ask them, well, then 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. You see, the moment I married my wife, my relationship with that woman changed, but also my relationship with every other woman on the face of the earth changed. If you have a new relationship with God, you're going to have a new relationship with sin.

It's going to change. So now we have two marks of the true Christian. One is.

The true Christian as a style of life, not perfect at all, but as a style of life, he'll be marked by a conformity to the nature of God and the will of God. Another evidence is this, that the true Christian, although susceptible to sin and many weaknesses. He is broken over the same, over his sin, over his weaknesses.

He is a confessional person, a person who is known to confess his sin. To acknowledge his sin. To not stiffen his neck against sin.

Now, let's go to another test, verse three of chapter two, by this we know that we have come to know him if we keep his commandments. The one who says I have come to know him and does not keep his commandments is a liar. And the truth is not in him.

By this we know that we have come to know him if we keep his commandments. So people tell me they have a new relationship with God. I ask them, do you have a new relationship with sin? But I also ask them, do you have a new relationship with God's commands? Because if you don't have a new relationship with God's commands, you do not have a new relationship with God.

Now, again, we need to look at this. By this, we know that we have come to know him if we keep his commands. The present tense here, I believe, is very, very important because, again, it is pointing to a style of life.

He's not saying that we know we've come to know him because we perfectly obey all the commands of God. He's saying we know that we've come to know him because the style of our life has been changed with regard to the commandments of God. Prior to a person's conversion, they don't think about God's commands or God's will.

They're basically ignorant of God's will. When they break God's will, they don't know it. When they do know that they break God's will, it does not bother them in the least unless, of course, they get caught.

But when someone is truly regenerate, there is a new relationship with the commandments of God. They have a sincere desire to know the will of God. Now, let me stop here, it's very, very important.

When I say that, I'm not speaking again of perfectionism, none of you study the Bible as you ought to. And neither do I. All of us are prone to dullness of heart, all of us lament oftentimes how cold we are to the commandments of God and unconcerned. But that is just the point.

When we are unconcerned and when we are cold towards these things, it bothers us. We see the wrongness of it. It strikes at our heart and leads us back to the second test.

We confess it and ask for grace. But let me tell you this, if you claim to know Christ and yet the will of God is not a central concern for you. You're not in his word.

It doesn't bother you that you're ignorant of his word, it doesn't bother you that you break his commands when you do know that you're breaking his commands, it has no effect on you. You ought to be afraid, very afraid. But if you're.

Someone who truly desires to know his will. And ashamed at times of your dullness of heart, it leads you to repentance. It causes you to strike out again to know what he has said and to understand his word, and it is a struggle and a desire in your life.

And this is evidence that God has done a work in your heart, that God has done a work. Are the scriptures important to you? Do they have any effect on your daily life? Isn't it amazing that one believer can write that they're sweeter than honey and another believer doesn't even want to taste them? I don't think so. I don't think so.

What relationship do you have with the word of God and the commandments of God? Remember what Jesus said, not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my father who is in heaven. This one will enter. He is not teaching that we are saved by works.

He is simply teaching that a truly converted man by faith. Will be a changed man who is concerned about the will of God and obedience to it is the will of God have a central place in your life now, even for those of you truly regenerate and those of you truly have a concern for the things of God. Let me just warn you about something.

Just because you have salvation, right, just because you're reformed or just because you've got a correct doctrine of of conversion and regeneration and all these things, don't think you're correct in all things. It's not just the will of God with regard to certain aspects of theology, it's the will of God and the commandments of God with regard to the totality of the Christian life. I run in a circle of men who are very concerned about salvation and the way that it should be properly handled and taught.

But sometimes I fear for us because the only thing we talk about is the proper theology with regard to conversion and regeneration and election and this and that and other things. And we forget that there's a whole gamut of Christianity out there and we're called to be submissive to all the commands of Christ, how we treat our wives, how we teach our children, how we spend the money that the Lord entrusts to us. Absolutely everything is to be brought in subjection to the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Not just one tiny part, but the whole, and that is the struggle of the Christian life, not that any of us have arrived or attained. But we press on. We press on to be conformed to Christ in all aspects of our life now.

It is the one who says, I have come to know him and does not keep his commandments is a liar and the truth is not in him. Now, I want us to go now to another test in verse six. Of chapter two, the one who says he abides in him ought himself to walk in the same manner as he walked, the first test was this, a true believer, their style of life will be marked.

By living in conformity to the nature, character and will of God. Another test is that the true believer will be sensitive with regard to their sin and be brought to the confession of it. A true believer will have a new relationship with the commandments of God.

They will become important to him in ever increasing measure. And when the believer has dullness of heart with regard to the commands, he will be struck in his heart that will be labeled as sin. Now, the next test is this, the one who truly knows Christ will walk as Christ walked.

The one who says he abides in him ought himself to walk in the same manner as he walked. You say, well, Brother Paul, then we're all going to hell who walks like Jesus walked. Well, that's what it says, first of all, that's what we have to deal with.

It says the one who says he abides in him is truly Christian, ought himself to walk in the same manner as he walked. The best way I can describe this is an illustration that I use from my childhood. I was raised on a cattle ranch.

We raised charlotte cattle and quarter horses. And my dad was from the old school. He would come in my room even when I was a little boy at five thirty in the morning and say, Paul, boy, get up.

First Bible verse I ever memorized was this. There's no rest for the wicked. That's what my dad would always say.

So he'd say, get up. And back then, when your dad said, get, you better be up before he gets to up. And so it's get up.

I got up. You didn't whine. You were happy to get up.

You were alive. And we would go out sometimes and we would feed the cattle and we'd feed the horses and we carried big rubber buckets. And my dad was a very big man, take big steps, and he'd walk out there through the snow.

And as a little boy, I wanted to be just like my dad, just like him. So I'd grab a bucket in each hand and, you know, you know what I would try to do. I would try to put my foot in his footprint.

And I would be straddled out there like a spider, like a drunken spider walking across that farm lot here, my dad taking normal steps of a very large man and me, a little boy of three feet and a half with two big buckets stretching out as far as I could. I looked absolutely ridiculous. And sometimes I would fall down, which is not very advisable in a feedlot.

Most of you aren't from the farm, are you? They're messy. So I would look ridiculous. I fell down often.

I stumbled and I got messy at times. And if any observer had been looking at it from outside, they would have laughed their head off. But there would have been no doubt in their mind that the greatest desire in that boy's heart was to walk like his dad, regardless of the failures, the drop buckets, the steps out of place, the being out of balance.

There was enough reality there to know that little boy wants to be like his dad the same way with the true Christian dropped buckets, stumbling off balance, messy at times. But when you look at the full course of their life, there won't be a doubt in your mind that person wants to be like Jesus, wants to be like Jesus. Is that a reality in your life? Is it a reality in your life, do you want to be like him and those of us who minister ought to be very, very careful here.

There are a lot of ministers in hell. We ought to be very, very careful. Our goals can become so distorted and reveal the true nature of our heart.

We want to be important. We want to preach well. We want to be respected.

We want to have large churches. We want to have all these things. And we could be a sign of an unregenerate heart of a religious man in route to hell.

There are so many places where I have preached big shots, big churches. And if I were to talk to those men about church growth, if I were to talk to them about ways to make their church more glorious or larger or whatever, I would have all their attention. But if I were to open up the book of Colossians and began to speak about the glories of Christ, they'd look over my shoulder wondering who's the next guy coming.

It's frightening. The goal of our life ought to be to be like Christ, to be like Christ. Is that a reality in your life? Now, again, I'm not talking about an inflamed attitude of a David Brainerd 24 hours a day.

None of us have such a passion that burns all the days of our lives. Sometimes we grow cold. But when we do, we are convicted and we are brought to our senses and we are pointed back to the right way, and that is of being conformed to the image of Christ.

I goes on is another test, verse nine of chapter two, the one who says he is in the light and yet hates his brother is in 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 manifestations of true conversion.

Is that we love the brethren. Now, brother here is not a reference to someone of another race, I hate that terminology anyways, because it's racist in itself, there's only one race, it's called a human race. There are not different kinds of races in this world, there are human beings in this world.

And here it's not a reference to someone of another color or another creed here. It is not a reference to the poor. We ought to love the poor, but that's not what he's talking about here when he talks about the brethren, our brothers, he is talking about other Christians.

And one of the greatest demonstrations that you are truly Christian is you're going to want to be with other Christians doing Christian things, talking Christian talk, thinking Christian thoughts. I have to say that because if I just say fellowship for a bunch of Baptists, it means eating pizza. It's true, isn't it? Or whatever you eat out here, but I'm sure you're eating something.

Prior to my conversion, I used to lift weights in this this gym, it's like a dungeon and it was right across this tiny street from a church. And every Wednesday night when those holier than thou people, I would call them, would go into that church, I would open up the gym windows and put on ACDC Highway to Hell as loud as I could possibly play it and just stand in the window and look at them. I was converted on a Thursday.

The. I couldn't wait to get to a church on Sunday and I did not want to leave. And I would go home with anybody as long as they were a Christian and they wanted to talk about Jesus.

A love for the brethren. A genuine, practical, real love for the brethren, a desire to be with them, to serve them. If you want to be with the ungodly, it is because you are ungodly.

Birds of a feather really do flock together. Who do you want to be with and what do you want to talk about? I can tell you who your God is so fast. I just have to listen to you talk all day.

What you talk about most is your God. What you think about most is your God. You see this idea, you can't judge a book by its cover.

It's not really true. Jesus actually did say you can judge a book by its cover. Who do you want to be with? And do you love the brethren, actively love the brethren? How is it that, you know, do not forsake the assembling of yourselves together so we all get together and sit and watch a man preach, sing a few songs, and we have not forsaken the assembly of ourselves together? We forget the rest of the verse.

We assemble ourselves together to minister to one another, to encourage one another, which means we don't just assemble ourselves together once a week in a building to do something where we rarely have contact with anyone else. But our lifestyles ought to be marked by a practical service to the body of Christ, a practical, real service to the body of Christ. Now, let me just share with you for a moment, kind of get you contextually where he's coming from.

You know, the passage in Matthew where Jesus talks about it's the judgment of the sheep and the goats. And he tells the sheep and the goats basically this. I was in prison.

You did not visit me, I was hungry, you didn't feed me, I was naked, you didn't clothe me and so on and so forth. And so we look at that and we say automatically, OK, we ought to have a prison ministry and we ought to give out clothes to poor people. That's not what he's talking about at all.

Now, we ought to do prison ministries if we're called to do so, and we ought to give clothes away to poor people. But that's not what Jesus is talking about. You see, even in some parts of South America, a few years ago, even in the country I was in, if you were thrown in jail, if someone from outside of that jail did not bring you food and clothing and water and so on and so forth, take care of your medical needs when you were sick, you were going to die because it's not like a prison in America.

They don't feed you, they don't clothe you, and they don't have a doctor on staff to help you. You go in that place, you better have someone outside of that place who's going to bring you things. Now, let's say that we're first century and we're all tucked away in some place having a Bible study in Rome.

And the elder is in front and he's teaching us the scriptures, just received a letter from Paul, he's reading it to us. And then as we all disperse, we find out that as the elders go one way, Roman soldiers come and capture both of them and throw them in prison. So the very next morning, we all call together a meeting, we leave the marketplace where we're working and we call together a meeting and we say, what are we going to do? We're in a dilemma.

Why? If we do nothing, they're going to die. But if somebody from among us goes and takes them food and water, they're going to be captured, too. And so the point is, Jesus is basically saying this.

You you did not love me enough to risk your life for me. You did not love me. But, Lord, you weren't there.

My people were there. He's not saying I was a pedophile and you did not visit me. Or I was a murderer in prison and you did not come to help me.

He's saying I was a believer thrown in that place. And yes, if you had helped me, you might be risking your own life, but you're called to do that. That's what people do when they love one another.

Now, think about the sometimes someone doesn't look at you right in church and you get mad at them and won't come back for three weeks. The strength of your Christianity is amazing. Isn't that pitiful? Some believers are willing to die for other believers, and some so-called believers are willing to break fellowship totally with another believer because they looked at them wrong.

It's the difference between one being saved and one being lost, don't you think? Love. The man that mentored me for so many years, he used to tell me, Brother Paul, in the New Covenant, love is not a thing. It is the thing.

It is the great sign, your love for the people of God. Some of you young fellows need to be very, very careful not to fall into the same trap that I fell into when I was younger. I would look at older believers and they wouldn't go out street preaching with me and they wouldn't do this and they wouldn't do that.

And I became angry with them. And it seemed as though I had more love for the lost people that I was preaching to than the true believers who weren't quite as zealous as I thought I was. Never forget salvation.

The assurance of it is marked not so much by your love for lost souls, but your love for the people of God. Your love for them. Now, we'll go to one more test, even though there are so many others maybe get into if we can.

Verse 15, do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the father is not in him for all that is in the world and the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life is not from the father, but it's from the world. The world is passing away and also its loss.

But the one who does the will of God lives forever. You live in the middle of a sewer of lust. This town is a sewer of depravity.

You shouldn't be offended. It's true. That doesn't mean you're not supposed to be here, but it is a sewer of everything.

This scripture I just read speaks against. A love for the world, the things of the world, the lust of the flesh. If I ever come to Las Vegas with my family to preach in a church here, I'm going to have to drive or blindfold my children when they get off the plane.

Just to go through the airport is an atrocity, and that's timid from what I understand. So there's the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life. Where do all those beautiful people go when they get old? Our world.

Is so filled with all these things. And we have to be very, very careful, first of all, you must realize you are not untainted. These things pull.

These things have power. They draw upon the flesh. One of the great marks of a Christian will be a battle against the world.

A battle against the flesh, a battle against the principalities and powers and might and dominions. The prince of the power of the air, it is a battle living in this town. Let me ask you a question.

Is your heart afflicted like the righteous lot? Be very, very careful when you are no longer shocked by what you see, be very careful. If you're going to live here and you may be called to live here. You need to always come under stern admonition, you need to know the danger of the place that you are in, you need to speak against it with your brothers, you need to encourage one another to be holy.

To realize that everything that is out there is vomit, oh, it glitters. Oh, it has power. Oh, it has an attraction, but it is rot.

And it is important to constantly encourage one another that this fallen world is not your home. If you give yourself to those things flagrantly, throw yourself at these things, it is evidence you do not know God, and if you do that throughout the week and come to Sunday, you come to church in order to somehow appease a conscience, you still do not belong to God. But if living in this place, your heart is afflicted.

And you struggle against it and you seek to be a witness here and you're here because you desire to be a witness, then rejoice. Rejoice. One thing I take encouragement from is this passage where it says in verse 17, the world is passing away and also its loss in the Greek, this can also be termed in a different way, a passive that the world is being pushed out.

The world is being pushed out. One of the things I always keep in mind in this age of such instability. Where the world seems to be convulsing under the weight of its own iniquity, the words of Isaiah, when he said in the year that King Uzziah died.

All the political world falling apart, everything going on, I saw the Lord, you always have to have placed before you believe the throne of God, the glories of God, the reality. Because what you see out here is not reality, it is all fake, it's all hollow, it's a billboard with nothing behind it but rot. It's being pushed out, though you do not know it, though you cannot see it, there is a mighty Jehovah and he sits upon a throne and he wars against these things and he is pushing them out.

You must live for a kingdom that cannot be shaken. That will not fall. Where righteousness dwells, where righteousness dwells.

One other test, there's so many in this passage and we don't have time to go through them all, but let's just look. Let's make our way back to chapter five, I want to show you one thing that's so very important, verse 12 of chapter five, he who has the son has life, he who does not have the son of God does not have life. There has been a great reformation going on in our country now, it's it's not known or recognized by pop Christianity or Christian media.

But I see all over this country where I preach young men and women coming back to the old truths, they're reading Spurgeon, they're reading Martin Lloyd-Jones, they're reading, reading all the men that they ought to read and they're beginning to see that much of what's been called Christianity for the last several generations in this country is wrought. And I've had a lot of emails from young men who who are seeking the Lord, but but look upon their life and have no assurance because they're they're so introspective, they're looking for great evidences of regeneration and conversion. And there's a problem there.

There's you see, the falsehood is like this. Conrad Murrell used to say you can walk a thousand miles that way and be in falsehood and a thousand miles that way and be in falsehood. But to walk in the truth is like walking on the edge of a razor blade.

And so there's some people today who are just like, I prayed the prayer, I live in sin, I'm going to heaven. There are other people who've come to understand some of the great truths about salvation and the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit and what happens to a man when he's saved. But they are believing in Christ, but they have no assurance because they're thinking that the moment they believe they ought to be fully sanctified.

I had a young man write me just recently, actually, I I answered him today and I said your great problem is this. He seems to show all the evidences of conversion, but I don't want to give him assurance. That's the job of the Holy Spirit.

But I want to teach him the scriptures. And I said to him, you know what your problem is, you are looking for all these great evidences of regeneration. You're thinking that the moment you're converted, you ought to be mature.

What you ought to be looking at is this. If the Holy Spirit has truly regenerated your heart, the first fruit is going to be repentance. You're going to repent.

You're going to look at your need. You're going to repent. You're going to be broken over.

But you're going to hate the sin you once loved. And when you get caught in sin as a young believer, you're going to hate what you do. But the other great evidence of regeneration is faith.

You are going to be believing Christ. You're going to be treating Christ as precious. He's going to be everything.

You're going to look at yourself and find no reason but to despair. But it's going to turn your eyes to Christ and you're going to find a glorious hope. You see, one of the greatest evidences of conversion is not that you can dot every I and cross every T, but that you are looking on to Christ.

You put no hope in the flesh. If someone were to walk up to you and say you are such a good person, you're going to heaven, you would almost vomit. You'd say, get away from me.

That's a lie. I'm going to heaven because Jesus Christ shed his blood for my soul. I preached my mother's funeral about two months ago.

She'd been a Christian for sixty four years and she tutored me a bit on how she wanted me to preach her sermon. And I figured, well, it is about her, so I'll listen to her. My mother was kind of she was kind of she would tell you where you were going.

She was very straightforward person. And she said, I know exactly what's going to happen. All those silly people are going to come marching down that aisle and they're going to come up to you and they're going to say, oh, she's in heaven because she was such a good mother.

She's in heaven because she was such a good wife. She is in heaven because she was such a fine lady. She said, you get up there and you tell them that that is right.

She goes, I want you to stand there in the pulpit and I want you to look down and point to my dead body. And I want you to say this woman. Is not in heaven because she was good, because she was not a good woman, and she said, then stop.

So I did. Although all those moralist and religious people who do not know Christ did not know Christ, their eyes got this big, their mouth dropped open, and then she said, you tell them this. This woman is in heaven because Jesus Christ shed his blood for sinners.

You see, it's Christ. It's just I'm looking unto Christ. I had a seminary student write me about two years ago and he said, Brother Washer, I'm so unholy and so unrighteous and so ignorant about God and I have the gift of mercy.

So I wrote him back and I said, young man, you are much more ignorant, much more unholy and much more unrighteous than you now know. And so he calls me on the phone and he said. Thanks, and I said, look, let me save you from idolatry.

He said, what do you mean? I said, you get up in the morning, you have your quiet time, angels descend singing the Messiah, you witness to everybody you see that day, you're blessing your enemies, you pray for four hours, you fast all day. How do you feel about yourself when you go to bed? He said, I feel good, joy. Next morning you get up, you don't have your quiet time, you don't read the Bible, you kick the cat, which is understandable.

All cats ought to be kicked. You kick the cat, you know, I would say I'm sorry, but I'm not. You kick the cat, you do all kinds of things, you don't do anything right.

How do you feel? I feel absolutely terrible. I said, then let me ask you a question. What is the source of your joy? It seems to me that the source of your joy is your ability.

To follow God, I said, young man, I gave up on that a long time ago. The source of my joy is the finished work of Jesus Christ on behalf of this man who gets very few things right. It's Christ, you see what God is, here's what God's going to do.

God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life. This is it. He's going to show you as you grow more and more of what you are.

He's going to break you. Into a million pieces, he's going to tear down all your hope in self. All your hope in spirituality, all your hope and your ability to follow him.

So that in the end of your days, you're going to be a man and a woman doing only one thing, looking unto Jesus. And putting no hope in the flesh. And I'm finished with a story.

I don't know if it's true or not, but it brings the point across. That Christianity is Christ and Christ alone. There's this story about a painter in Europe and his son, and they just painted together and loved one another.

And in the first war, World War. The boy went off to battle. And he died.

But he died saving the life of one of his comrades. The old man was just destroyed. He loved the boy so much.

And so after the war, a few months later, this soldier, young soldier comes knocking on the door. He opened up to him. The old man did the famous painter and the boy looked at him and said, sir, I served with your son and I always wanted to learn how to paint.

And when we would be in the foxholes and different places, he would teach me how to draw. And I loved your son, but one day a bullet was marked for me. And your son saw the rifle before I did jumped in front of the gun and your son died for me.

And, sir, I know you're a famous artist and I'm nothing, but I drew this picture of your son. It just he just means more to me than anything, and so with what he taught me, I just drew this picture of your son. Well, the artist looked at it and it was amateur to say the best.

But he so appreciated it that he went into his his great gallery and he moved aside all his great paintings and he put as a centerpiece that picture that that soldier drew of his son. And then a few years later, the man dies. And there's a great auction.

People from all over the world are gathered there to buy this man's art. The auctioneer stands up, the podium slams down the mallet, said the auction will begin and the first piece to be auctioned will be this. And he pulled off the cover and there's the picture that the soldier drew.

Everyone in the room is laughing, mocking. Some of them said, you've got to be kidding. No, we didn't come here for this in these types of games.

Get that out of the way and let the auction begin. But just so happens the young soldier was said it was seated there in the auction. He heard the mocking, it burned his heart.

He said they couldn't understand, they couldn't see who this person was, what he was, what he meant to that soldier. And so he stood up and he said, sir, I don't have anything but a few pounds shillings. But I'll give you everything that I have if you just the people will stop and give me that painting and let me leave with it.

So the auctioneer looked at him, slammed down the mallet, said sold for a few pounds and shillings, and then with everyone saying, finally, the painting's out of the way, the auctioneer slammed down his mallet again and said the auction is over. The people said, what do you mean the auction's over? It hasn't even begun. And the auctioneer rolls out a piece of paper.

It's the last will and testament of the painter. And he says this, the one who takes my son gets it all to hell with all these promises that these silly TV preachers are giving me other than Christ. They don't need to offer me healing.

They don't need to offer me money. They don't need to offer me cars or comfort or Social Security or anything else. Is not Christ enough? The one who gets the son, the one who takes the son gets it all, everything else is rubbish.

We don't come to Christ because he will fix our lives. We don't come to Christ because he will balance our checkbook. We do not come to Christ because he will heighten some awareness of self-esteem that we shouldn't have in the first place.

We come to Christ because he's worthy. Because he's worthy. Years ago, a young lady called me and she'd been struggling with her salvation.

She says, I'm believing, but I just don't know if he saved me. I'm repenting, but I just don't know if I'm truly saved. And I said, then repent and believe, even though he sends you to hell because he's worthy.

Do you just repent and believe in order to get something? Repent and believe because he's worthy. You say, well, I never heard of such a thing. Well, you should.

We're so man centered, it's so all about us. Don't laugh at Joel Osteen. He runs through every church in America.

It's all about us. No, it's not. It's all about him.

And true Christians like it that way, true Christians like it that way. When God says, I do everything for the love I have for my great name, Christians say, amen, so be it. Do it, Lord.

You see, it's all about him. Is it all about him? Is it about Jesus? Do you sometimes not sleep at night because you're thinking about him? Old preacher from the country used to say a fanatic is just a person who loves Jesus more than you do. Do you think about him? Now, something that is also very, very important.

It is the job of those of us who preach. To teach big things about God. To give people big thoughts about Christ, to magnify God before people so that everything else will disappear.

But isn't it amazing in our day and age? Could give a conference on self-esteem. Or how Jesus Christ wants you to be prosperous and fill up. To overflow the largest stadium in America, but if a preacher were to get up and say, I am going to preach on the attributes of God for a solid week or I'm going to preach on the glories of the cross.

The people would barely trickle in. Because we have a Christianity in America that's all about us. But I want you to know, heaven has a different view, it's all about Jesus.

Everything God has ever done, he has done for his son. And God does not love people more than anything. He loves his son more than everyone.

Because his son is worthy of such love. Oh, he does love the in ways that a preacher like me could never begin to explain. But do not think for a moment this universe is all about you.

Tozer said this, if all the men and women on the face of the earth were to suddenly go blind, it would not diminish the glory of the sun and the moon and the stars in the same way. If every man on the face of the earth became atheist, it would not diminish the glory of God. We can add nothing to it or take nothing away from it.

It's all about him. And except for the comment about the cat, I have no regrets and the things I have told you. It's true.

It's true. Let's pray. Father, I come before you and ask you that you would help us, that you would work in the hearts of men and women.

And also, Lord, I know that many of the things I'm saying here they've heard before, but confirm in their hearts that this is a truth believed by many men. And that has been taught down through the ages. In Jesus name, Amen.

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