

Recovering Spiritual Life

by Phil Beach Jr.

Phil Beach Jr. emphasizes the urgent need for the church to recover spiritual life by focusing on the inward condition of the heart rather than mere outward religious practices.

Duration: 39:58

Scripture: Isaiah 58:1

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Spiritual Renewal", "Inner Life vs. Outward Religion"

Description

Phil Beach Jr. emphasizes the urgent need for the church to recover its spiritual life, warning against the dangers of outward religion that lacks inward sincerity. He draws from Isaiah and 1 Samuel to illustrate how Israel's reliance on external rituals led to spiritual decline and defeat, highlighting that God values the condition of the heart over mere religious practices. Beach calls for a return to genuine relationship with God, urging believers to examine their hearts and seek true spiritual maturity. He stresses that the church must not be deceived by outward appearances but should focus on cultivating a vibrant inner life with Christ. The sermon concludes with a call to prayer for personal and corporate revival within the church.

Transcript

I want to begin a message this morning from the heart of the Lord entitled Recovering Spiritual Life, Recovering Spiritual Life. There is a desperate need for recovery of spiritual life within the house of God, the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Spiritual life is the basis of what Christianity is all about.

I'm going to be reading from the book of 1 Samuel, 1 Samuel, okay? But before we go to 1 Samuel, you could turn there. I'd like to turn to Isaiah, and I want to lay a foundation here from the scriptures. We're only going to go until 1230, so like I said, we might go on a few weeks with this, depending on when this other message comes forth into my spirit.

When that does, I'm going to give priority to it. But until then, I want to minister on this subject of restoring spiritual life, because I believe right now the Holy Spirit must come to the church in America and other places to do a real work of renovation in restoring spiritual life, because Christianity cannot be understood in any other manner than the vibrant flow of spiritual life. The vibrant flow of spiritual life from the Lord Jesus Christ simply oozing out of the church, not the building, the church, which is made up of living stones.

Okay, I misplaced the reference here that I'm looking for in Isaiah, so it's going to take just a few moments. Oh, I'm sorry, okay, it's Isaiah chapter 58. This is a foundation that we want to lay here before we begin in the book of Samuel, Isaiah chapter 58, beginning in verse number one.

Isaiah 58, beginning in verse number one. Let's try and make sure that we ask the Lord to apply this to our life, not to other churches or other people or other denominations, but let's let this word from the Lord speak to our heart this morning, and really stir us on to understand what God's intention for us as believers really is. Verse number one, cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgression.

That word means sin, and the house of Jacob their sins. Now, Isaiah 58, verse one, is speaking about the need for God's people to see our sins, for us to see our sins. This is the subject, this is what God wants us to see, our need for Him, our need to receive grace, our need to receive forgiveness, our need to forsake sin, our need to walk in relationship with Him.

This is what is important. But notice what verse two says. Here the word of the Lord comes and says, show my people their sin, yet, verse number two, yet they seek me dearly and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God.

They ask of me the ordinances of justice, and they take delight in approaching to God. So here we see that there is a condition present. There is an outward pursuing of God, an outward religion, an external form where there is an inquiring of God's ways, there is a seeking after Him as a nation, there is the seeking after justice and taking delight in approaching God, but yet the inward life, the inside, the quality of the inward life has been corrupted, has fallen.

This is one of the continuous burdens of the prophets in the Old Testament toward Israel as a nation. They engaged in outward religion, they got involved in ritual, they got involved in going to church and singing their songs, and offering up sacrifices to the Lord, and church as usual, if I might use that phrase, church as usual, but the problem was that inwardly their hearts were far from the Lord. Inwardly their hearts had fallen from the Lord.

And so the prophets were constantly seeking to awaken Israel out of their self-deception into a posture where they focused on the things that really mattered, and that is a heart that was clean before the Lord. Psalm 24 is another reference that I want to read. Psalm 24, beginning in verse 1. The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and they that dwell therein.

For He hath founded it upon the seas and established it upon the floods. Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord, or who shall stand in His holy place? He that hath clean hands and a pure heart, who hath not lifted up his soul to vanity nor sworn deceitfully, he shall receive the blessing from the Lord and righteousness from the God of his salvation. So here is another Scripture that teaches us the importance of the inner life, the inner life, the qualities that nobody sees.

Oftentimes, outward religion keeps us from dealing with our inner life. Outward religion keeps us from focusing on the things that really matter. And when this begins to happen, a whole system of religion, and this is what is predominant in America today in the church, there's a whole system of outward religion and faithfulness to all different kinds of church traditions and outward forms and rituals, but inwardly, the place where God is really looking, the place that really matters to God.

It's not the kind of songs we sing that matters to God. It's not the format we have that matters to God. It's not even so much meeting in a building that matters to God.

What matters to God is the inward heart. What's going on on the inside? The purity, the love for Him, the qualities of righteousness and holiness and temperance and the love for God and hatred for sin and the forgiveness and the forbearance and the long-suffering towards one another. It's these qualities that make the Christian life worth its salt.

And when there's an outward form and an outward religion, but the hearts are far from God, then God is against that. He's against it. He doesn't want it.

There's Scriptures in the book of Isaiah where God says, Remove from me the noise of your songs. They're an abomination to me. I detest them.

The reason why God detests them is because it's all lip service. The Lord's against lip service, beloved. Don't interpret this as a scathing, a harsh word.

I don't want to come across as scathing, but I've got to be faithful. God is against lip service. He is against outward religion.

He doesn't want anything to do with religion that is all outward. God has come to establish a relationship with a people called the church, and that relationship has nothing to do with outward religion. It has to do with hearts broken before a holy God, depending upon the blood of Christ and the power of the Spirit to live a life of righteousness and holiness before God.

The church is not a building. The church is not an edifice. The church is not made of stones.

The church is made of people. And the great danger and crisis that we're facing today in Christianity is that there is a neglecting of the heart, a neglecting of the things within the heart. Jesus said, it's not what a man eats that defiles him, but it's what comes out of a man.

That's what defiles us and destroys us. It's not what we put in. It's what comes out.

It's what's in the heart. It's our attitudes and our inward life that the Lord is looking at. When God wanted to anoint David as king, He sent Samuel to the house of Jesse.

Thank you. And Samuel looked at David's sons, except one wasn't there. And with his natural eyes, he said, surely this is the Lord's anointed one.

He's a very handsome young man. Surely this is the Lord's anointed one. Surely this is the Lord's anointed one.

And each time Samuel did that, God said, no, that's not the one I've chosen. No, that's not the one I've chosen. And Samuel became perplexed and said, well, Jesse, do you have any more sons? And Jesse said, as a matter of fact, I do.

But he's insignificant. He's out tending to the sheep. And Samuel said, get the boy and bring him here.

And as soon as Samuel looked at him, God said, that's the man. He's the one I'm going to anoint as king. And then God lovingly rebuked Samuel and said to him, Samuel, man looks on the outward, but I look at

the heart.

And the problem in Christianity today is that we have been deceived. We look on the outward. All Christianity is outward now.

What kind of church do you go to? What kind of building do you got? What kind of music program do you got? What kind of music ministry do you got? What kind of preacher do you got? Is he dynamic? Is he a teacher? Is he a prophet? Does he have this kind of ministry? Do they pray for the sick? It's all outward. And we make our judgments about everything based on what we see with these eyes. And there's a fault in that kind of judgment because when we make those kind of judgments, we are not thinking like the Lord.

God looks on the heart. And so the prophet here in Isaiah says, listen, inwardly there's corruption. Now, that's a foundation that we want to lay before we go into 1 Samuel.

Let's turn to 1 Samuel. And 1 Samuel was a book written. It was a transitional book.

It was a book written after the judges and before the kings. It was sort of in between. And the nation of Israel had really fallen to an all-time low in the book of Samuel.

Now, I think it's interesting to note that the book of Judges, then Ruth, then Samuel. There's a book, Ruth, that's right in the middle of Judges, and it's right after Judges and right after Samuel. And the book of Samuel was written during the time of Ruth.

During the time of Ruth at the end of the Judges right before the kings, right before David came on the scene, right before Saul came on the scene. So it's a transition book. Israel was at an all-time low during this time.

Low meaning spiritually. The spiritual life of Israel had declined to where it didn't exist. But they had religion.

They had outward religion. They were faithful to their church tradition. And we'll see that as we read.

But I think this verse, the last verse in the book of Judges, depicts perfectly what was going on in the nation of Israel at the time. The last verse in the book of Judges. In those days, those are the days of Judges and Ruth and the beginning of 1 Samuel, historically speaking.

In those days there was no king in Israel. Every man did that which was right in his own eyes. So the spiritual state of Israel at the time was characterized by everybody doing what's right in his or her own eyes.

Everyone was doing their own thing. Yet at the same time, there was adherence to religion. There was adherence to the religion of that day.

That is a dreadful state to be in. Now, I want you to, if you would, turn your Bible to 1 Samuel 4. Now, I want to read several verses in order to capture a particular event that is about to happen. And now, once we understand this event, we can begin to build upon this truth, and we will see from the Bible God's plan to recapture or rebuild or revitalize spiritual life.

Verse number 1, 1 Samuel chapter 4. And the word of Samuel came to all Israel. Now, Israel went out against the Philistines to battle and pitched besides Ebenezer, and the Philistines pitched in Aphek. And the Philistines put themselves in array against Israel, and when they joined the battle, Israel was smitten before the Philistines.

And they slew of the army in the field about 4,000 men. And when the people were come into the camp, the elders of Israel said, Listen, wherefore hath the Lord smitten us today before the Philistines? Let us fetch the ark of the covenant of the Lord out of Shiloh unto us, that when it comes among us, it may save us out of the hand of our enemies. So you see, they had an ark of the covenant where God was supposed to be dwelling.

And they considered this ark to be very significant. And at the present time, it wasn't with Israel. So they figured, Listen, let's go get the ark of the covenant and let's bring it into our midst, because surely if we have the ark of the covenant, God will fight our battle for us.

So verse 4, The people went to Shiloh, that they might bring back from thence the ark of the covenant of the Lord of hosts, which dwelleth between the cherubims and the two sons of Eli. Hophni and Phinehas were there with the ark of the covenant. And when the ark of the covenant of the Lord came into the camp, all Israel shouted with a great shout, so that the earth rang again.

And when the Philistines heard the noise of the shout, they said, What meaneth the noise of this great shout in the camp of the Hebrews? And they understood that the ark of the Lord was coming to the camp. And the Philistines were afraid, for they said, God is coming to the camp. And they said, Woe unto us! For there hath not been such a thing here hitherto.

Woe unto us! Who shall deliver us out of the hand of these mighty gods? For they are the gods that smote the Egyptians with all the plagues in the wilderness. So here the Philistines were trembling because they all of a sudden realized that the ark of God was in the camp of Israel. Now understand this.

The ark of God had a significant history. It was the ark of God that was responsible for the things that happened when Israel was going through the wilderness. All the plagues and all the trouble.

When God instructed Moses to build the ark and God brought great deliverance to Israel and fought against all their enemies, the word had spread throughout the whole region there that God is an awesome God of the Hebrews. So they had an incredible history. But there was a problem, and we're going to see what the problem is.

Verse 9, Be strong and quit yourselves like men. So someone from among the Philistines rose up and began to encourage them. Don't get so discouraged, O ye Philistines, that you be not servants unto the Hebrews as they have been to you.

Quit yourselves like men and fight. And the Philistines fought, and Israel was what? Defeated, smitten. Israel was defeated.

And they fled every man into his tent, and there was a very great slaughter, for there fell of Israel 30,000 footmen. And the ark of God was taken, and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were slain. Now let me ask a question.

Listen carefully. Why did God allow Israel to be dreadfully defeated when Israel had faithfully gotten the ark and brought it into their midst? I'll tell you why. 1 Samuel chapter 2, verse 12, Now the sons of Eli, this was the priesthood, this was the religious system of Israel's day.

This was where all of the adherence to religion took place. This is where they were committed to their outward form. Listen.

Now the sons of Eli were sons of Belial. They knew not the Lord. And the priest's custom with the people was that when any man offered sacrifice, the priest's servants came while the flesh was in seething with a flesh hook or three teeth in his hand, and he struck it into the pan or kettle or cauldron or pot.

All the flesh hook brought up, and the priest took for himself. So they did in Shiloh unto all the Israelites that came thither. Also before they burnt the fat, the priest's servant came and said to the man that sacrificed, Give flesh to roast for the priest, for he will not have sodden flesh of thee, but raw.

And if any man said unto him, Let them not fail to burn the fat presently, and then take as much as thy soul desires, then he would answer him, Nay, but thou shalt give it me now, and if not, I will take it by force. Wherefore, listen, the sin of the young man was very great before the Lord, for men abhorred the offering of the Lord. Do you see that what we see here is that inwardly the life of the priesthood was corrupted, but yet they were outwardly trying to be faithful to their religious system.

That's why Israel thought that if they got the ark and brought it into their midst, God would fight their battles for them. But see, there is no power or no significance or no worth in outward religion. And God's presence in the ark was only there as a sign that inwardly the heart of Israel was right before God.

But Israel, listen, Israel had began to look at the outward religion and place hope in it. They began to look at the outward ritual and place hope in it. And that resulted in devastation and spiritual ruin.

So that at the time when they thought God was going to bring victory, they failed. So the condition that we have here is a people inwardly corrupt. Inwardly their hearts had strayed from the Lord.

Inwardly their hearts were backslidden. But outwardly they were involved in their outward religion. And when the battle came and the enemy came against them, they were defeated.

Now, there's several things going on at this time. Not only is there a defeated religious system and a defeated nation, but there's also an intercessor praying. Her name is Hannah.

There's a son who is being born as a result of the prayer. His name is Samuel. And Samuel is hearing from God.

And Samuel is about to come on the scene. So the foundation that we needed to lay, and I don't think I'm going to go into the next point, we'll save that for another time. The foundation that we wanted to lay today was that here is a story in the Old Testament where outward religion was thriving, but the quality of the inward spiritual life had fallen to pieces.

God was against their religion. Their religion did not work in time of battle. They were defeated.

The Philistines came and captured them. Many of them were killed. And likewise, today, there are forces working against the church in this last hour, seeking to seduce us from remembering what's important, the inward heart, the walk with Jesus, the love relationship with Jesus, and emphasizing and putting our

confidence and trust in outward religion, and even hiding in religion.

But in such a state, you can be assured that the Lord is against that situation. He's against it. And so, the word of the Lord for us today, based on this short little story, and next time we'll look and see that amidst spiritual apostasy and spiritual decline, God is always moving on people to intercede.

There's intercessors. Hannah was praying, and the fruit of her prayer was a boy named Samuel. Samuel represents God's thought, God's way, God's word, God's heart.

Samuel comes up and stands against the religious system and pronounces judgment upon it. That's what is always happening. Whenever religion takes over and the inward heart of God's people falls, God will begin to raise up intercessors who will pray and it will birth within the church a vision, an understanding, a prophetic word from God that will come forth that will represent God's true word, God's heart, God's focus on the Son of God, and will bring judgment and pronounce judgment against the outward religion.

And that's what's happening today. And we need, as God's people, to be very much in prayer so that our lives do not come under the category of outward religion because if they do, we will stand in judgment. There's no escaping this judgment.

When God's word comes forth to us, when God's word is revealed, when we hear God's word, it will either scathingly rebuke us and expose our religion and our inner corruption, or it will strengthen our inner life and encourage us and build us up and encourage us to go on. One or the other. We will either come under the blessing of the word or the curse.

And in this hour that we're living in, what God is doing is God is birthing through prayer and intercession a prophetic word that's coming forth to the church today. It is a prophetic word that is exposing all the religious games going on, and all of the devices and all of the schemes of Satan that are currently being implemented against the church to bring deception. It is a voice that is coming from God's heart to the body of Christ, and it is a voice of clarity, a voice of purity.

It is a voice trumpeting the message of the Son of God, bringing us to repentance, bringing us to a place where we once again reaffirm what really matters, and letting go of the things that don't matter. Confidence in religion, the cares of this life, an adulterous heart, love for money, promiscuity, sexual impurity. It's got to be judged in the church.

Before God judges the world, He's got to judge the church. Judgment must begin in the house of God. And it's our religion that provides a perfect haven for this sin to be perpetuated, because religion never saves anyone.

Religion doesn't bring conviction. Religion doesn't expose our hearts before a holy God and stir us all to repentance. But religion fosters self-deception.

We feel like we're okay when we're not, because we're looking outwardly and we're neglecting the inside. And there is a word from the Lord that's going to come forth in this late hour. And it's going to be a word from God's heart.

It's going to bring us back to Christ. And I want to admonish you with the love of God to pray that you will hear God speak this word to you, and that you will be willing to leave whatever God puts His hand on in your life that's not pleasing to Him. Because there will be a people in this late hour who will receive the full

blessing of the Lord, because they will follow the Lord wherever He leads.

They will go after Him. In the book of Revelation, there are seven churches that God speaks to. Each one of these churches has from the Lord Jesus a word.

A word of encouragement, a word of admonition, and a word of rebuke. Listen, God's ultimate intention for every believer, for every church, is spiritual maturity. Spiritual maturity is putting off fleshly desires.

Putting off sinful desires. Putting on the Lord Jesus Christ and simply living a life wholly dedicated to doing God's will. That's what spiritual maturity is.

Spiritual maturity is following Jesus Christ wherever He leads without arguing with Him. Spiritual maturity is God's goal. But there are forces that are working in the church today to prevent spiritual maturity.

If the devil can't convince you not to give your life to Jesus, then once you do, he'll come and bombard you with all kinds of devices to keep you spiritually a baby, so that you're of no use to God. In the book of Revelation, we see various different things that God shows us that were working in the church to keep them in spiritual infancy. And I want to close this morning by mentioning a few.

This is found in Revelation 2 and Revelation 3. One of the things that the Lord was showing us in the book of Revelation that keeps His people in spiritual infancy is, as David Wilkerson said, to somehow cause them to fall from the heights of their first love. You cannot go on to spiritual maturity if your hot, fervent love for Jesus has warmed. And you know it warmed when the name of Jesus just doesn't strike a chord in your heart the way it used to.

That's one of the devices to keep you spiritually immature. And ultimately, you will be defeated by certain things. Another device is the introduction of false doctrine into our life.

The kind of false doctrine that makes us think it's all right to engage in uncleanness. If you are under the idea, or under a teaching, or under the influence of any kind of an idea that makes you believe that you can engage in uncleanness, sexual impurity of any kind, you are being deceived. You are being deceived by the devil.

That will keep you in spiritual infancy. It will result in God's hand of judgment coming upon your life. Another lie is that the church, one of the churches was known as those who had a name that they lived, but they were really dead.

Basically, what that is, a profession of something that you really don't have. So you see, all of these forces and all of these spiritual battles going on in the church today, the same things that were mentioned in those churches are still happening today. And they are succeeding in keeping, for the most part, the whole church in spiritual infancy.

Because spiritual infancy is not the state to which God has promised we will reign with Christ. It is to those who overcome, to those who suffer with Christ and overcome with Christ and conquer with Christ and by Christ and who arise and grow into maturity and who turn their back on the world and the things of the world and follow Jesus all the way in His will. Spiritually immature people don't do that.

So there's a great issue at hand right now. And I'm trusting that God will take His Word and sovereignly use it to open up our understanding. This is the nature of the travail going on in the heart of the Son of

God right now.

Jesus is praying right now for spiritual maturity to come to the church. And He's inviting anyone who will enter in with Him to pray with Him that He might share His heart with us along these lines. So, let's bow our hearts in prayer this morning.

Father, I thank You for this Word that You have put in my spirit, Lord. I pray, God, I feel so inadequate, but Lord, I pray that You'll take the words, take these things, Lord, and plant them very strongly within our hearts, Lord. I pray that they'll reproduce in our hearts, Lord, fruit.

Fruit that will awaken us. Fruit that will awaken our conscience. Lord, I pray You'll expose the lies of the enemy that are currently being perpetuated against us and implemented against us, keeping us bound in certain areas of our life.

Lord, I pray that You'll take this Word and You'll empower it and You'll use it to loose people from any kind of spiritual deception that's occurring in their life. The end result being that we might come more fully into a union with You by faith, into a life of utter surrender, where we're trusting in Jesus and being changed into His image more and more. Father, bring forth in fullness this burden that You are currently working in our hearts, that the end result might be a church without spot or wrinkle, filled with Your glory, prepared for translation, prepared to come into life and immortality.

Lord, we stand against the powers of the devil and in Jesus' name, break them, Lord, we pray. For Your sake. Hallelujah to God.

Thank You, Lord. In Jesus' name. Amen.

And amen. Beloved, I pray God will encourage you this morning. Let's spend some time before the Lord in prayer.

We have some time. It's only 12.30. If you want tapes, Mike's got them.

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