

# It's Clean-Up Time in the Church

by Philip Powell

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*The church must return to its original purpose of pursuing holiness and knowing Christ, rather than seeking happiness and worldly success.*

**Duration:** 58:08

**Scripture:** Hebrews 9:27-28, Hebrews 12:12, Hebrews 12:14-17, 1 Peter 4:17, 1 John 3:1, 1 John 3:3

**Topics:** "Church Revival", "Christian Holiness"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher begins by discussing 1 Peter 4:17, which emphasizes the importance of not suffering as wrongdoers but rather as Christians who glorify God. The preacher then references a talk by John Jamison, the ex-commissioner of police, who highlighted the goal of the church as knowing Christ and making Him known to others. The sermon then shifts to John 14:6, a verse associated with Billy Graham, which declares Jesus as the way, the truth, and the life. The preacher also mentions Hebrews 12:14, which encourages believers to pursue peace and holiness in order to see the Lord.

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## Transcript

Right, well, this is our third meeting and our second in the series of the Bride of Christ. The Church as the Pure Bride of Christ. Last week we dealt with, will the Real Bride please step forward? And we looked at four signs of the emerging Church in today's world.

Today we're going on to a fairly controversial topic, and I guess we'll be making some controversial statements from time to time. If anybody wants to, you know, question it in the meeting, or afterwards question anything to clarify any point, that's fine. But we will be making some fairly controversial comments.

We're doing that quite deliberately, and we trust that the message will get out. We believe that it is clean-up time in the Church. Christ is coming back for a Pure Bride, and that's the topic that we are addressing today.

And so there are some verses of Scripture I want to direct your attention to. One is in 1 John chapter 3, and verse 3. But we'll take a little run-in to that from verse 1. Verse 1. 1 John chapter 3, verse 1. Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God, therefore the world does not know us, that is, is not intimate with us, because it did not know Him. Christ was the most misunderstood person that lived, from the point of view of a worldly perspective.

Verse 2. Beloved, now we are the children of God, and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, that is, the second coming of Christ, when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And then verse 3. And everyone who has this hope, that is, the hope of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, purifies himself, or keeps on purifying himself, it's a constant process, just as He is pure. And then in Hebrews chapter 9. Hebrews chapter 9 and verse 27 and 28.

And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many, to those who eagerly wait for Him, He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation. The old King James says, without sin unto salvation. Then just a couple of other references.

One is listed there on your notes, the other one isn't. Hebrews chapter 12, verse 14. Verse 12, let's take a little run-in here as well.

Hebrews chapter 12, verse 12. Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed. And it goes on, pursue peace with all men and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord.

Looking diligently, lest anyone fall short of the grace of God. Lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled. Lest there be any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright.

For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears. And then, just something else I haven't actually listed here as a text, but it is in the notes later on. 1 Peter chapter 4, verse 17.

Again, taking a run-in from verse 15. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or a busybody in other people's matters. Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter.

For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God, and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God? Okay, last week we made reference to a meeting that we attended, and you can ignore the date there, I got the dates mixed up. But in actual fact, it was in Matamora Baptist Church, and it was probably towards the end of last year, was it? It was December last year, okay. And we went to hear John Jamieson, who was the ex-commissioner of police, and he made an incredible talk about truth and our present society.

And he said this, and it remained with me, he talked about the situational ethics of our day. And he said, our society has been so affected by it that it's spilled over into the church. And the church has changed its focus, basically.

The focus of the church has changed from being a pursuit after holiness to a pursuit for happiness. Now, I thought that was really challenging, a pursuit for happiness. And we made reference to that, and we concluded our message last week, just to recap quickly, by suggesting that the one and only biblical goal is that adopted by Paul in Philippians chapter 3, verse 10, where he says, that I may know him.

Now, that is, I believe, the only legitimate goal within the framework of the kingdom of God. We can make goals in the world, that's no problem. But when we bring that motivation over into the church, ultimately, we will have problems.

Because there is only one goal that we should have, and that is, that I may know Christ, and that I may make him known. That's the goal of the church. The goal is to know Christ and make him known to others.

That's the supreme objective of all true Christian ministry. Okay, and so what we did then, we came to a conclusion. I want to pick it up from there, both for those who get the tape, and also for our little group here.

In this connection, we made brief reference to John chapter 14, verse 6, and now I want to return to that and develop it somewhat. John chapter 14, verse 6, is that wonderful statement that I personally always associate with Billy Graham. I suppose it's because back in the 1950s and that era, which some of you can't even think back to that time, we had Billy Graham come through New Zealand and Australia, and he conducted these great crusades.

And one of the prominent texts was John chapter 14, verse 6, and it became a song. Jesus said, I am the way, the truth, and the life. That's what Jesus said.

So this verse, I always link it with that. John 14, verse 6. Now let me explain in the notes what I've done here. Some people think you're trying to be clever when you do this.

I'm not. But I do believe that the Bible was not written originally in English. Do you agree with that? It was written originally, the Old Testament in Hebrew and the New Testament in Greek.

Okay, now words have certain meanings and words change their meanings over a period of time because of use. For example, the word prevent, just as an illustration, has changed its meaning. When the Old King James was written in 1611, the word prevent meant simply to go before.

It's the same as what our word precede now means. So there is a little verse in Thessalonians where it says, Paul says, now concerning the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, he said, I don't want you to be ignorant. I think it's 1 Thessalonians chapter 4 or thereabouts.

He said that those who have died, those who are alive, he says, will not prevent those who have already died. Now what he was saying was, those who are alive will not go before those who have died. In other words, and then he goes on to explain, he says when Christ comes and the trumpet sounds, he says the dead in Christ will rise first, right? So he explains it.

The word prevent doesn't make sense in that context today because prevent has changed its meaning from going before now to holding back. Does it not mean that? You know, if you prevent somebody, you're not just going in front of them, you're actually holding them back. So that word has changed its meaning and that would apply to quite a lot of words.

Now this is why in certain things, just to bring out points, I have tried to go back to the original. Now I'm not a Greek speaker, nor am I a Hebrew scholar in that sense, but I do have access to some helpful books. Not commentaries, but rather concordances.

And so what we do is look up the meaning of the words as they were and the usage as they appear in the New Testament and we make certain conclusions. And this is what I've done. Now you'll notice against the notes that there's a number.

For example, Jesus said unto him, I am the way. And then you've got this number, 3598. That is actually the number that appears in the Strong's Concordance.

And it's identified further down in your notes and the meaning is given. So that's just to explain that usage there. Now in this statement, there are really three things that Jesus says.

First of all, he says, I am the way. Then he says, I am the truth. Then he says, I am the light.

Jesus said, I am the way. The Greek word is the word hodos and it appears 102 times in the New Testament. There are two basic ideas.

It's translated various ways. 83 times it's translated way, just as it is here. Jesus said, I am the way.

Eight times it is translated wayside. Six times journey. Three times highway.

And then another couple of occasions when it's translated variously. But basically it conveys two thoughts. There's a literal idea about it and there is a metaphoric idea.

The literal idea is a travelled way or a road. A traveller's way, a journey, travelling. So Jesus is basically saying, I am a road.

The metaphoric sense means a course of conduct or a way or manner of thinking or a feeling or of deciding. I'll just make a note here of Ephesians 2, verse 3. For those of you who are making additional notes, I haven't put that in the reference. But in Ephesians 2, verse 3, Paul talks about people who have been changed by the power of the gospel.

And he says in this verse, he tells us how we are changed. He says that we are saved by grace through faith and that not of ourselves. It is the gift of God, verse 8 and so on.

But in verse 3, he says, among whom, and this is the old King James now, among whom you had your conversation in time past. Again, there's a change of meaning of that word conversation. Now when we use it, it means simply verbal communication, doesn't it? But then it meant actually conduct or the way we live.

And Paul says in Ephesians 2, verse 3, he says, right, you used to have a particular lifestyle. You had a way of thinking. You had a way of doing things.

But now that you've become a Christian, you are changed. You are no longer on that way. You are now on another way.

You get the point? Jesus said, I am the way. Now the thing that encouraged me yesterday as I went past the big march was that there were no individual churches identified. But rather, there was a great body of Christians going.

Now, we have used the word Christian now in that wise sense. But in actual fact, the early disciples weren't called Christians. They were called the people of the way.

That was the first name that was given to them. They were called the people of the way because Jesus said, I am the way. Incidentally, they were first called Christians of Antioch in about, what is it, Acts chapter 13 or thereabouts.

They were first called Christians of Antioch and it was a nickname that was given to them. They said, oh, you know, they despised them and they said, oh, those Christians, those Christ ones. But the name stuck.

And it's a good name, isn't it? But that basically is the idea of this statement, I am the way. He says, I am a course of conduct. I am a way or a manner of thinking.

I am something which changes your feeling and someone who changes your whole basis of making decisions. Jesus says, I am the way. Then he says, I am the truth.

And just as in the expression the way, so in the original Greek word here, there are two ideas as in the word way. There's the literal and the metaphoric. So now, here in this expression, when he says, I am the truth, there are two ideas.

The first has to deal with fact. The second has to deal with, deals with attitude. The word that is translated truth, *alicia*, could be rendered verity or truth.

What is true in any matter under consideration or what is true in things appertaining to God and the duties of man? Jesus said, I am that. I am true as to fact. I am true as to reality.

When you go into a court of law, if you ever are under that doubtful privilege of being there, particularly if you're being judged, the jury are asked to look at the facts. They're asked to decide. They're asked to put away prejudices.

They're asked to examine the evidence. One great lawyer said, if I've got a weak case, I make a long speech. But if I've got a strong case, I produce the evidence.

Right. And Jesus says, I am truth as to fact. Beautiful.

Same sort of thing. It's more powerful than that though. When it says verily, verily, it's amen, amen, I say to you, same word.

It brings it from the future into the past. You see, in that sense, it is a wonderful thing with God. You see, we dwell in the present.

We can only exist in the present. But we have a future and we have a past. God exists eternally in the now.

So there is no thing in all of the passage of history that he is ignorant of. It is as if it's happening all the time with God. Now, we can't understand that fully.

It's something that boggles our mind. But when it talks about you being saved, for example, you know, we make the decision at a point in time. But as far as God is concerned, he saw it from before the foundation of the earth.

Right? It is done. So when Jesus is using that expression, verily, verily, really, he's bringing the whole thing into his, you know, into the expression of his divinity. And he's saying, it is so, it is so.

And they're usually very, very powerful statements. Good. I am the way, then, he talks about that in regard to fact.

But then also in regard to attitude. Or as the expression really brings out the idea of truth as a personal excellence, that candor of mind which is free from affection, pretense, simulation, falsehood, or deceit. We live in a world where men and women engage constantly in half-truths.

Right? You know that in the world. You know, that is part of our society. Jesus made a most remarkable statement in Matthew 6, verses 22 and 23, when he said, the eye is the lamp to the whole body.

And he says, I say to you, if your eye is single, then your whole body is full of light. But if your eye is evil, if you've got an ulterior motive, then your whole body is full of darkness. If the light, then, that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness.

And this is embodied in that idea where Jesus says, I am the truth. There is no deceit in him. There is no deception.

And basically what he says is that gradually as we get to know him, so he deals with all those areas of deception and deceit, half-truths, and so on. Now this is very, very important. And I believe it's an issue that the church needs to address.

Because we tend to bring that same motivation and we think it's clever politics. And it comes into the kingdom. Jesus said, I am the truth.

Remember when Jesus saw a man and his name was Nathanael. Remember, he looked straight into his eyes and he said, Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile. And he was so guileless that he didn't even take it as a compliment.

He said, how do you know me, Lord? He didn't try to hide behind it. He didn't say, no, that's not me, Lord. He said, how do you know me, Lord? And he said, before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.

And as Jacob Prask, and that was the other thing I meant to tell you in my announcement and I forgot, I'll tell you after I finish the message. But Jacob Prask is a person who has studied Madras, method of interpreting the scriptures, of interpreting the scriptures, said that what Jesus was actually saying to Nathanael there was, before history started, I saw you. Because the tree was the emblem of the tree of life.

And he said, before Philip called you, he wasn't just talking about a literal tree, but he was talking about the start of it all. Because Christ was more than a man. And that was why Nathanael said, you are the Messiah.

You are the Christ, the Son of the living God. But that expression, without hypocrisy. Now, when I mentioned this in a very notable leadership meeting in Australia, and I said I believe that God wants us to get to the point where, you know, He wants to deal with that, that two-facedness, which we sometimes put on.

And somebody quoted then, to try and counter what I was saying, he said, oh, well even Paul said I've won you with guile. But actually, if you look at that verse again, it's interesting. Paul is making a bit of a confession there.

And he's actually saying, well you haven't got anything against me. And then he thought, well yes, maybe I did try to win you with guile. And he's not putting it forward as a commendable thing to do, but even the great apostle may have had that weakness in his own character, which was highlighted when he made that expression.

I still believe God wants us to be guileless. He wants us to be open people. And then, and only then, can we really claim to be people of the way.

Now, when people say this, you know, you see, we are human. And I'm not putting forward myself as a supreme example. I believe I've got to teach the Scriptures.

And by the grace of God, I try to measure up to them, otherwise I'm a hypocrite. But, we don't measure truth by example. What we have to do is see the truth, and then try and live the truth according to the help of the Spirit of God.

And that is the way that we humbly accept the correction of the Word of God, and we come under its authority. Now, this word truth has another sort of aspect, which is somewhat linked here. But, it is a negative in the sense that it comes from a root, which means to lie hidden.

But it's a negative of that which lies hidden. So what Jesus is saying is that the way I live, and the way I want you to live, is that there is nothing that is hidden. But rather, everything is open before God.

You see, we're crazy if we think we can hide from God. He knows everything. And so Jesus is saying here, I am the way, I am a way of living, of thinking, a manner of feeling, and deciding.

I am the truth. There is nothing hidden, but it is open. Now, out of this, you remember, Pilate made a statement in John chapter 17, and asked a question.

Pilate therefore said to him, Are you a king? Jesus answered, You say that I am a king. To this end was I born. And for this cause came I into the world.

And then he adds this, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone that is of the truth hears my voice. Pilate said to him, What is truth? And you'll notice, if you look on in that context that Jesus didn't answer, he didn't have to.

By just standing there, he was truth. And Pilate was smitten in his very being because he encountered absolute truth in Jesus. Now, it seems to me that in the church of Jesus Christ today, we have almost lost the art of presenting men and women with Christ.

We present them with all sorts of notions, all sorts of ideas, all sorts of schemes to get joy, happiness, and the rest of it. But our job is to present men and women with Jesus Christ. And when they encounter him, they feel the very truth which flows from his person.

Jesus said, I am the truth. Pilate said, What is truth? Jesus said, Everyone that really hears my voice, everyone that is of the truth, will hear my voice. In other words, I believe that what he's alluding to here is the fact that every sincere, searching heart will ultimately be brought into contact with the one who is the truth.

I remember we were talking just before coming to the meeting today. We were told that we were going to have an unexpected or an unknown guest in our home yesterday. Friday, was it? Friday.

And we didn't know who it was. This person rang up a couple of weeks ago and said, Our name is still listed, well, under my name, but then underneath it's got Eastside Christian Center because we haven't changed the thing in the telephone book. And so my address is not identified there.

And he rang up and he said, Where's Eastside Christian Center? So I explained that we weren't any longer related to that, but I gave him the address just in case that's what he wanted. And he said, Well, no, really, I want your address. So I gave it and then sort of afterwards said, Well, who are you? You know, I don't always like to give an address like that.

He sounded a nice person, mind you. And he went quiet. I said, You don't want to tell me who you are? And he said, No.

I said, Do I know you? He said, Oh, yes, you know me, all right. So I said, Oh. He said, I'll see you on June the 25th.

I said, Oh, that's interesting. 24th, was it? 24th. Yeah, thanks.

Okay. All right. Clever, you people.

June the 24th. These people that work in banks, you've got to watch them. I keep a note of dates.

Okay. June the 24th. And we didn't know who it was and we conjectured who it was and I did sort of, I did say it could possibly be this person.

Anyway, he turned up on our door and it's a person I haven't seen, well, he reckons for 40 years. I said, I'm not that old. But it was a person I knew in school days.

And he was back in our home today because he wanted to see mum and dad. He hadn't seen them either for years and years. And he said, but it was a person that I was very friendly, probably my best friend in school.

And I hadn't seen him all that period of time. When we were together anyway, to cut a long story short, we were talking about a person who came through New Zealand way back in the 50s who was a missionary in Belgium, Congo in those days, what became Zaire. Incredible man.

And I'm just thinking of it now. This man, William F.P. Burton his name was. He told the story when he went to the Congo, nobody else had been there with the missionary message.

And he went into you know, jungle territory. He went among the people who were cannibals and witnessed for Jesus. Amazing stories he could tell.

Amazing, amazing stories. After 30 years of working for Jesus there in Belgium, Congo he left behind 1,000 churches. But I remember one little story he told of a person who, and I don't know, he did write a book called Mudishi Congo Hunter.

And it might have been this Mudishi, I can't remember exactly. But he actually was nowhere near any missionary this particular person. He was a heathen, he didn't know the gospel and he trekked right across the country.

Eventually got to Mr. Burton's home and he said I've come to hear a message. And he said God has directed me right across the country to your home. Now he didn't know Jesus.

He didn't know the gospel. But he had a desire to know truth. And Jesus said everyone who desires to know truth, everyone who hears my voice, everyone, everyone, praise God.

Now I don't know about you, but there are many things about, you know, eternity, hell and heaven that I don't fully understand. People say to me, you know, if they haven't accepted Christ and if they have been presented with Christ certainly and rejected him, then the Bible is very, very clear. But there are certain areas that I am not certain about.

But I know this, that the God of all the earth will do that which is right. And there is something, something mysterious about the power of God. We never know how many deathbed conversions there will be until we get to heaven.

But God is incredibly kind. I am absolutely convinced of that. And the one who came into the world and said I am the way, the truth and the life, came not to cast people into hell, came not that people should perish, but he came that they might have life.

Now I know that our motivation must always be that everybody has an opportunity to make a decision and we must preach the gospel as much as we are able, but we cannot, we do not know everything, how it's going to unfold ultimately. But the one who said I am the way, the truth and the life, said that he that heareth my voice, everyone who knoweth the truth, that is of the truth, everyone that is of the truth, heareth my voice. Okay? So Jesus said I am the way, Jesus said I am the truth, Jesus said I am the life.

And that word that is translated life appears 134 times in the New Testament. Now there are three ideas here and let me run down them quickly. There is the idea of natural life.

Jesus is claiming to be the life. He is the source of natural life. Paul teaches this in Acts chapter 17 and verse 28 when he says, and he quotes a poet, a Greek poet, he says, as the poet has said, one of your own Greek poets, in him we live and move and have our being.

Now there is nothing spiritual about that. That is a purely natural statement that the life that we live, the natural life that we live, we derive from God. Isn't that incredible? But the life, the source of life, God is the source of life.

None of us has inherent life, we have imparted life. God alone has inherent life. He is the source of life.

We are dependent. Our life is but a vapor, it can go like that. It may last for threescore years and ten and then is extended beyond that.

But how many do you know who haven't reached that period of time? My family here we know. I mean I lost a brother when he was, how old was he mum? About fifteen. Hmm, young.

In Him we live and move and of our being. He's talking about natural life. He's also talking about spiritual life.

When he says, I am the life. John chapter 10 verse 10 which we're going to come to in a moment. The thief cometh not but for to steal and to kill and to destroy.

I am come that they may have life. Spiritual life now he's talking about. That they may have life.

Life that is the absolute fullness of life both essential and ethical which belongs to God. He's talking about a spiritual dimension. When he says, I am the life.

But then he is also talking about another dimension. He's talking about an eternal dimension. When he says, I am the life.

Life that is real and genuine. Life that is active and vigorous, devoted to God and that will last forever. So last week in looking at the nature of the emerging church we suggested that there are four characteristics which are hallmarks of this bride of Christ that we're talking about.

The emerging church is first of all characterized by real life. The emerging church is characterized by true holiness. The emerging church is characterized by genuine unity.

And the emerging church is characterized by sincere love of the truth. Now that begs a question which we need to ask. We put it there for you in your notes.

Is there an emerging church in today's world? I want to give you four illustrations. One of them appears in the Omega Times which is attached to your notes. I knew the very well known evangelist in Britain called David Watts and he worked among the Anglicans.

A very fine man. And I worked with him quite closely when I was in Manchester. And David Watts used to have a saying about the world.

He said, the world generally, incidentally he died when he was 40. He was a great man and we never understand the mystery of it all. He died of cancer.

Which is where, you know, there's no simple answer to that whole area of healing and the mystery of it. I don't understand it. But David Watts was a great man doing a tremendous job for God.

And David Watts had a saying. He said, generally in the world, out there, the world says yes to Jesus but no to the church. Now I think that's true.

Really they want Jesus but they don't want all the trappings and trimmings that come with the church. Another evangelist in Australia used to say a similar thing. He works among the bikers.

His name is John Smith. And he has a tremendous grasp of things. Although I wish he would use, you know, sometimes he uses swear words and I just wish he wouldn't do that.

But he has a tremendous grasp on things. And he makes a statement, he says, the world says yes to Jesus, OK, the church, no way. Now I've found that so, both in Australia and in New Zealand.

And increasingly so. When I was over in Australia, I found people were moving out of the church and they were disillusioned by the organized or the structured church. I've noticed this as it happens and I believe it's happening very much here in New Zealand.

The people are becoming disillusioned with the structured church. And they gravitate into groups and it was happening in England for a period then. I found even my own colleagues couldn't understand it.

And yet, that was how they had formed originally as a group. It's funny, isn't it, when this sort of thing happens. I've worked mainly with Assemblies of God most of my life.

But as soon as something new starts to happen, the old starts to look askance at it. And the AOG, a lot of the leaders in England were very critical of the house church movement as it was spoken of. But I began to see something that was happening.

It's happening in Australia now and it's happening increasingly and it will continue to happen increasingly in New Zealand. Why is it? Is this this sort of new emerging church? When I came to Hamilton about, how long have we been here now? 18 months? Something like that? We made contact with somebody because we wanted some equipment. We wanted a photocopier and some fax equipment.

The person who came out to see us was a new Christian. And we asked him how it all came about. And he said, oh well, I just got hold of a Bible and I started to read the Bible.

And he said, I believed and I began to see that there was something in it. And he said, I went round to the churches and I didn't feel at home. In many of the churches he went to and eventually he gravitated to a fairly new group which I won't identify but here in the city of Hamilton.

A little while ago, shortly after we moved into St. Andrews, I was walking by the river and I met a man and started to witness to him. And he said, oh yeah, he said, I'm keen on Jesus but he said, I'm disillusioned with the church. And then, just this last week, we had a person come to our home to help us with a communication problem that we have with our equipment.

And we started talking to him and he said, it's funny that I offered him a book by a friend of mine who is a lawyer in Britain who has written on the resurrection. And Val Grieve, some of you remember meeting him when he came through not so long ago. And I offered him this book about the resurrection and I said, look, it's proving the resurrection from a legal perspective.

And he said, oh, that's very interesting. He said, only a little while ago I went out and bought a Bible. And he said, I'm reading the Bible.

He said, I had difficulty understanding the old King James. He said, so I've got a modern version now. And he said, I'm reading it.

And I, you know, and I felt, well, yes, there's something happening. There's something happening. People are being turned on to reality.

Now, I believe this is a sign of the emerging church. Now, I believe with all of that in the background, and how long have I got? Pardon, about 15 minutes, have I? About 15 minutes. I've got to get it on the tape, so I've only got an hour.

7 past 4. 7 past 4. Getting late? Yes. Yeah, OK. Pack everything.

Pack everything, OK. Four areas which we the church must address. J.B. Phillips, in 2 Corinthians 5-7, that's his rendering of that verse, says this, For if any man is in Christ, he becomes a new person altogether.

The past is finished and gone. Everything has become fresh and new. Is that true? Yes.

If any man is in Christ Jesus, he has become a brand new person. The past is finished and gone. Everything has become new.

If everything has become new, why are churches and so-called counsellors all the time addressing that which is old? Why are they? If a person is new in Christ, why are they always taking them back into their past? Why are they always probing? Now, I believe in counselling, but I believe that there is so much counselling today because the message that the people have been saved on has not been a genuine message. It's only been part of the truth. Right.

And it's a lot of human desire. Now, I believe that what has been lacking in the real message of the church is that there is no repentance. People are not called to repentance today.

They are called to turn on to Jesus, they are called to do anything and everything, and so the counselling circle is a recurring circle. And, as one man has said, we have replaced the penitent form for the counsellor's couch. They haven't been taught to rely on the Lord, they haven't been taught how to repent.

John the Baptist, and if what we have suggested, that because John the Baptist couldn't preach in the establishment, he had to go outside of the establishment, and God is raising that up. Incidentally, when I go to England later, I'll be meeting up with Jacob Prask, and we're going to do some seminars together. We're going down some of this stuff, and he's doing his stuff as well.

And, I believe that God, and he's had the same sort of opposition that I've had here, but the thing is much bigger there, so he gets more openings. But, basically, it is because the church will not face the issue of repentance, that they have all the problems, so very often a recurring problem, and this leads me to the last verse that I want to bring to your attention, hopefully. And that's John chapter 10 verse 10.

The thief cometh not but for to steal, to kill, and to destroy. I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. What does the thief do? The thief steals.

The thief kills. The thief destroys. The word that is translated thief there is the word from which we get the term kleptomaniac, kleptos.

He's an embezzler, he's a pilferer, and the Bible transfers that name to false teachers who do not care to instruct men. Now that's interesting isn't it? That's the implication. The thief, and in many areas, because the teaching has not been the genuine teaching, it has stolen away the very basis of divine life.

The thief cometh not but for to steal, to kill, it's there. The thief kills. Now, there's a natural application and a spiritual application here.

Both of these, all of these concepts. The natural application is death, natural death. The spiritual application is this.

The thief kills, and the idea is to sacrifice or to slay or kill the paschal lamb. Now what has the church done? The established church, particularly the Roman Catholic church, has said that you need to have another sacrifice every week. And so they brought in another sacrifice.

Every day. Brother who came out of it. Every day.

They have to offer a new sacrifice. And Christ becomes the re-offered sacrifice in the mass. What is it doing? It is killing.

It steals, it kills, it destroys. How does it destroy? Again, there's a natural which has mortal consequence. To destroy means to put out of the way entirely, to abolish, to put to an end, to render useless, to kill.

It has a mortal consequence. Haven't we heard this week that in New Zealand, and think of it folks, think of it. New Zealand, the choice place in the world for bringing up a family, has the highest teenage suicide rate in the world.

What's gone wrong? What's gone wrong? The thief comes to destroy. He comes to destroy. But there's another aspect which has the idea of spiritual or eternal consequence.

It has the idea of destroying that for eternity. Now there are three things that are identified in John chapter 10. Let me read John chapter 10 verses 10 to 14 quickly for you.

So the thief cometh not but for to steal, to kill and to destroy. I, that's the good shepherd, I am come that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd, the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep, but he that is an hireling.

So we have the thief, we have the good shepherd and we have the hireling. The hireling and not the shepherd whose own the sheep for not seeth the wolf coming. The thief in the sheep fold is the wolf, so they are the same thing.

The good shepherd stands alone. I am the good shepherd, Jesus said, but he says there's an hireling that's there. Now the hireling is identified by two things.

He's a man who works for wages, he's a professional and he's only discovered when the wolf comes. In the church today, unfortunately, we've had all sorts of people who are simply there for what they can get out of it. Now that's sad, but I believe that you need to watch anybody who makes charges for what he's doing in the kingdom today.

There's a very well-known man who travels the world who charges \$175 for his seminars and he will have 3,000 or 4,000 people that come out to his seminars. Now you don't have to be a mathematician to know there's a lot of money there. You can measure a true ministry by the attitude and action of the good shepherd.

He did not do that sort of thing. And you'll find that with so many of those things, it doesn't matter how prominent the name, you will find that all sorts of false teachings start to emanate. The person who I haven't identified by name, but he had a class where he was teaching people how to work miracles.

Now you think of that. You think of Peter and James and John and Paul saying we're going to have a seminar teaching you how to work miracles. You can imagine what sort of miracles you get.

And I tell you practically every one of those miracles that are there are false manifestations of God. And you can mark my words, but people who go down that track and who associate with that type of thing will have all sorts of problems and God is going to shape the whole thing because he's calling us back hallelujah to basics and to honesty and to truth. The thief cometh not, but for to steal and to kill and to destroy.

Unfortunately hirelings are making packs with the thief. And if you make a pack with a wolf, what do you have? Pardon the pun, a pack of wolves. But that is what is happening.

That is what is happening in the church today. Now opposed to that, Jesus says, I am come to give you life. And he says, and it's more abundant.

And here's a couple of ideas about the abundant life. It's spiritual life which we have dealt with, but this word abundant means life which is beyond measure. It means life which is exceeding any measure or rank or need.

It is life which is over and above. It is life that is more than necessary. It is life which is super added.

It is life which is superior, extraordinary, surpassing, uncommon. Hallelujah. Jesus said, I have come to give you life more abundantly.

So there are four things that I want to identify quickly. The life that Christ offers is active in a world that is largely passive. Things are just happening, and we become a part of the thing, of the drift of the stream.

Thank God the Christian, the true member of the bride of Christ, stands against the stream and says by the grace of God, I'm going to stand against the tendency and the trend. Hallelujah. So the life that Christ offers is active in a world that is largely passive.

The life that Christ offers is real in a world of superficial sham. We're living in a world today of veneers, plastic society, instant coffee, instant tea. It's nice, isn't it? No, it's beautiful.

Right? But we're influenced all the time by that sort of thing, and there's a superficial sham which has come down upon society, but Christ comes along, and he offers you life that is real in the midst of that. And then Christ offers life which is genuine in the midst of hypocrisy. Boy, oh boy.

God will deal with all hypocrisy, and there's so much of it unfortunately that has gotten in to the church. But Christ offers life that is genuine. Christ offers life that is lasting in a world that is passing away, and I believe that out of that, quickly, very, very quickly.

I'll run it down, and you just think about it. Ralph Mahoney, when he came to us in Australia a little while ago, some of you may have heard the name Ralph Mahoney, he said, God gives opportunity for self-judgment. If that fails, he offers judgment by our colleagues.

When that fails, it will either be judgment and exposure by the world, or divine judgment. Now you can think of recent things that have happened in high places, in regard to church ministry, and it's a very sad thing. The PPL thing in America, Jimmy Swaggart and so on.

Very, very sad. But there's an opportunity when God offers self-judgment. If we fail, he offers judgment by our colleagues.

If that fails, something I could tell you right now is happening in Australia, which it's going to have ultimately, I believe it will, media exposure, which is going to be very, very unfortunate. It's going to spill over into probably affect New Zealand and so on. God gives that opportunity.

He gives opportunity for self-judgment. If we fail, judgment by our colleagues. If we fail, it's either media exposure, or it's divine judgment.

And so within the context of all that, God is calling us to replace self-motivated and world-oriented activity with that which is divinely motivated and Bible-based. In the Old Testament, what happened was when it

seemed that the message of the Jewish nation of the law and so on was failing, what did they do? They turned. And Isaiah chapter 8 verses 9 to 9.2 says what they were doing.

They were seeking familiar spirits, going to wizards and so on and so forth. And God said that they speak according to this because there is no light in them. In fact, he said, if they don't go according to my word, it is because there is no light in them.

And he portrays a picture of very great darkness until ultimately then he says, the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali towards the end of that passage, they that sat in darkness have seen great light. What's he referring to? He's referring to Jesus Christ coming along. And Christ comes into that darkness and he comes with his total answer to man's total need.

Why then, if we have the total answer, do we go to the world to try and find the answer for people's problems when Jesus Christ has all the answer, he's the total answer. Hallelujah. A gospel plus is always a gospel minus.

Doesn't matter how you deal with it. A gospel plus psychology, a gospel plus anything within the context of the church ultimately destroys the effectiveness of the gospel message. So, God is challenging us, I believe, to throw out the platform and ministry gimmicks taken on board over the recent years.

The man that I was brought up under was a man called Howard Carter. He used to say, the bait with which you catch them is the food with which you have to feed them. And so, if we try and catch them with gimmicks, we'll try and have to keep them with gimmicks.

One of the prominent ministers of this city, who's no longer here, used to have what he called a tunnel of faith. People passed through a tunnel of faith. It was all very nice, all very moving, but it was a gimmick.

It was a gimmick. We had the power team come through. Ever heard of them? A gimmick.

I wouldn't mind those strong guys going into a school and testifying, but when they put on their show in a church, breaking things, they went to Townsville. Quite interesting, because up there in Townsville, they have timber, which has been conditioned to face the hurricanes. And so, these fellows, you know, they could reckon they could break any four-by-two or six-by-two with their, just going into it with their shoulder.

Well, these naughty boys up in Townsville, without the pastor knowing, I think, because all sorts of trouble flowed from that, but they got hold of some of this specially conditioned timber. And when the guy went to try and break it with his shoulder, he ended up dislocating his shoulder. Now, that was sad for him, I'm sure, but it shows where we get to.

And my friends, who, some of them, got involved in it, crazy fellows, they used to lie on nails and all that sort of thing as a demonstration as if that was going to save people. And they did it all through Australia and some of the biggest churches, some of the biggest churches, it was nothing more than a gimmick, that's what it was, to get people inside and if you try and get them in with gimmicks, where's the gospel? The gospel is totally apart from gimmicks. The essence of it is against that.

And so what happened, these guys, the pastor, some of my friends, they even dressed up and then went and lay on these nails. And the people didn't know that they had special cloth under them so they didn't hurt them. Well again, that was a deception.

And that sort of thing in the church of Jesus Christ, it's high time it was kicked out forever because it brings in a false idea, a false idea. The bait with which you catch them is the food with which you have to feed them. We have to re-examine the conviction and call to true ministry by the leaders of the churches which are setting trends and that is what is happening.

In 1 Timothy 5 22 it says, lay hands on no man certainly, neither be partaker of other man's sins, keep yourself pure. What's he talking about? He's saying, Tim is saying, if you're not pure, when you lay hands on people you will commend and commit to them something of your impurity. You think of that in regard to certain things that have happened in this city and how many people have been influenced by the laying on of hands of men who have been immoral themselves and there is something that is committed as a result of the imposition of the laying on of hands and that will influence the whole of ministry in that particular connection.

Lay hands on no man certainly, neither be partaker of any other men's sins, keep yourself pure. Finally, there has to be a rediscovery of what it means to live with eternity in view. We're not here for time.

I put a reference there, Proverbs and it shouldn't be, it should be Ecclesiastes. Ecclesiastes chapter 3 verse 11 where the preacher says everything has a time. There's a time to be born, there's a time to die, there's a time to sing and there's a time not to sing.

There's a time to gather and there's a time to scatter. And then in verse towards the end he says that God has made everything beautiful in its time. Right? Even when I was young I was beautiful, I mean handsome.

Everything is beautiful in its time. There's a beauty to everything that God has made in its time. And then he sums the whole of life up there in that chapter and he says everything is vanity because all of that beauty passes away.

And ultimately it comes to an end. Was it Shakespeare said and time delves the parallels in beauty's brows? How do you feel folks? You ladies that are plastering it up and killing up those cracks and we men that are shaving it off and right? Everything is beautiful in its time. And then verse 11 he says this, but God has put eternity in everybody's heart.

He's saying basically that we are made for something beyond time. We are made for eternity. And the church's message relates to eternity.

I believe that God wants to bring us back to a basics where we have eternity in view. Spiritual renewal which is a thing that we're committed to, which is a thing that we long for more than anything else, is never a thing of the future, it's always a thing of the past. Spiritual renewal is always a return to basics.

Always. Every spiritual renewal throughout history you'll find that God takes people back. He doesn't take them gone.

He takes them back. Billy Graham on one occasion was criticized by a modernist preacher and they said Billy you have taken the church back 50 years. He complained.

He said I've been trying to take the church back 1900 years, not just 50 years. And that's what it is. Spiritual renewal is always a return to the basics.

Our problem is we're always looking for the new and the novel. But God says consider the old. Consider the old ways.

I pray that God will give us and his church, those who hear the tape and those who share the message, that God will give us a desire for that which has already been. There's nothing new under the sun and you can learn from history. God causes the people to be stirred towards the fact that he's coming again and he that has this hope within him purifies himself even as he is pure.

I am the way, the truth and the life and when you've got me you've got the way, you've got the truth, you've got the life. May God make us pure through that life for his namesake. Okay let's bow our heads in prayer.

Lord, you know our hearts. You know the desire of everyone who's gathered here, you know Lord the sense of times of maybe emptiness and longing and desire for more of yourself and more of your word. We believe that you've motivated us Lord with this desire and we don't think of ourselves as being anything special but Lord we do long for a manifestation of your power.

And we pray that you will meet your people, we pray that you will help us in the name of the Lord Jesus and we pray that the message Lord that is so important to be heard will be heard. We believe that you will cause it to be heard. Thank you.

We thank you for everybody who's been here today. We pray that you will now dismiss us with your blessing, keep your good hand upon us and keep us rejoicing in the love of the Lord. Thank you.

In Jesus mighty name. Amen.

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