

# What Makes Christ Uncomfortable In A Church

by Santosh Poonen

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*This sermon emphasizes the importance of surrendering to God and highlights the need for genuine humility, reverence for God's Word, a sense of need, and the establishment of peace in our lives, marriages, homes, and churches. It calls for a deep desire for God's name to be magnified, a willingness to be crushed in humility, a reverence for God's Word, a constant sense of need, and a pursuit of peace as key elements to make Christ comfortable in our midst.*

**Scripture:** Acts 7:44, Matthew 11:28, Philippians 2:3, Revelation 3:17, Ephesians 2:14

**Topics:** "Surrender", "Humility"

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## Description

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## Transcript

I thought we could begin by turning to a verse in Acts chapter 7. From the very beginning of the time when mankind was created, human beings have always been religious people. It began with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, and even after that, in the second generation, you see Cain and Abel offering sacrifices. And as we know, one of them was actually pleasing to God, the other was not, and yet both of them did offer sacrifices.

And that pattern has continued on throughout history. I believe it's the same today as well. The only part of God's creation that is religious is are human beings.

You don't see dogs or cats or any other animals worshipping, having any kind of religious gatherings, meetings like that. Clearly, you have the ability to meet together and work in packs. You see that in all of creation, almost.

And like with wolves and all, they say they meet in packs and things like that. But with human beings, you see this desire. There's an innate desire within us to worship something.

And in Romans chapter 1, we are told that the lie of the devil is essentially that we worship some created thing rather than the Creator Himself. This is the lie of the devil. And here in Acts chapter 7, we see that

even the people of Israel, those who were pleasing to God, were, there were different types of places of worship that they built.

So you read in Acts chapter 7 verse 44, our fathers, and this is Stephen reminding the Jews about their own history. Our fathers had the tabernacle of testimony in the wilderness, just as he who spoke to Moses directed him to make it according to the pattern which he had seen. And so they had this tabernacle, a dwelling place for God throughout their journey, even though they were in disobedience.

And we read that with most of them, we read in 1 Corinthians 10 and in Hebrews 3 and 4, that with these people to whom God gave the responsibility to build Him, His church, His gathering, dwelling place, He was not happy and He had to kill them off in the wilderness. But He gave them these instructions to build them a tabernacle. And then their children, in verse 45, we read, took that tabernacle having received it in their turn, our fathers brought it in with Joshua upon dispossessing the nations whom God drove out before our fathers.

And so they took this tabernacle into the land of Canaan as well. And they had that there for some period of time. And then it says, until the time of David.

And David found favor in God's sight and asked that he might find a dwelling place for the God of Jacob. Now sometime between this time when they were, when they entered into the land of Canaan, we don't know what happened to the tabernacle. We read about different gathering places like Shiloh where Eli was and other places.

We don't know if it was the same tabernacle. But have you thought about where is that tabernacle today? It's buried somewhere in the land of Israel and disintegrated. Well, David comes and he says, Lord, you dwell in tents and I'm dwelling in a nice house.

We'll read about that here in a little bit. And so God said, and he said, I want to build you a nice house, a house of wood and gold and all that. And God, David found favor in God's sight.

And what we're told in verse 47, it was Solomon who built the house for him. But then we get to the point that Stephen was trying to make. That is in verse 48.

The most high does not dwell in houses made by human hands. This is the word I've been thinking about today. The most high does not dwell in houses made by human hands.

Now I think all of us would agree that we don't put any value in the building. Here I am sitting in my house. Some of you are sitting in your own homes.

A number of you are sitting in that building. And is God only in one of these places? No, we believe he is. We want him to be here with all of us.

A lot of people put a lot of value in beautiful buildings, cathedrals and very elaborate buildings, thinking that somehow that will cause the presence of God to come there through those, maybe they put stained glass with images of the saints and things like that. No, the most high does not dwell in houses made by hands. I think we all understand that.

However, in seeking to be a part of a new covenant church and to build a new covenant church, it's easy for us to think that somehow our efforts or something we do will cause the presence of God to be here.

There are certain principles on which the presence of God is manifest. There are certain principles that God shows us in his word that allow him to be present in our midst.

And no matter what else we might do, and no matter how much we might think of ourselves as very holy or self-righteous, if these things that God has shown us in his word clearly are not there in our midst, then God cannot be there. And so I thought we could think about a few things that make Christ uncomfortable in a church. If you continue reading in verse 49, so we read verse 48, but most high does not dwell in houses made by human heads.

As the prophet, he's quoting Isaiah here, heaven is my throne and earth is the footstool of my feet. What kind of house will you build for me? Says the Lord. In other words, I see God saying, if I was looking for you to make, looking for a dwelling place for myself, could you do any better than heaven? I already live in heaven.

And when I want to put my feet to rest, he's using picture language so that we can understand. When I want to put my feet up to rest, I put it on the earth. And there on this earth is this small little portion of that footstool that's called North America.

And then on that portion of the footstool is the United States. And then there's Georgia and there's Atlanta. And then Atlanta is this small gathering.

You think you could build a house that's better for me than heaven that I already have and earth is my footstool? That's what he's saying. And yet God does want us to build a dwelling place for him. What place is there for my repose? That word repose, maybe we don't use as often, but it essentially means a place of peace, tranquility, serenity, a place where you can be at rest, where you can come and relax.

Think of your own homes, for example. Maybe you have a favorite chair in your home or a favorite spot in the home where you feel like, ah, I can be myself here. I can relax.

I'm around people that I'm comfortable with. And for most people, that is sometimes not even in their home, but hopefully at least in your home. And that's what God is asking us for.

He's saying, if you're going to build a house for me, just build me a place. It doesn't matter what it looks like on the outside. It doesn't matter if it's a tabernacle or a nice temple like what Solomon built or the temple that they rebuilt through Haggai and Zechariah.

None of those things, because at this time when Stephen is speaking to the Jews, they were the Jews who prided themselves on the temple, as we see that they did with Jesus. And so here were these people who prided themselves on the grand building, and God was not there. And Jesus showed them, and Stephen was trying to show them that it's not about the kind of building.

It's not about even the pattern that you have. Can Christ be comfortable in our church? That's the most important thing. Then He will be there.

Then He will come in there gladly. We often pray, Lord, fill us with your Holy Spirit. Send your Holy Spirit, the outpouring of your Holy Spirit.

You know, the Holy Spirit is a person as well. We know that because we're told in 1 Thessalonians 5 that not to grieve the Holy Spirit. It's the Spirit of Christ.

And if we want the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ to be in our midst, which is the only thing that matters, we must not grieve Him. Have you seen that verse? Let's look at it very quickly. 1 Thessalonians 5, verse 16 says, Rejoice always.

17 says, Pray without ceasing. 18 says, Give thanks in everything. You know, a lot of people know this, right? They say RPT, which can be an acronym for repeat.

RPT, Rejoice, Pray, Thanks. RPT. Very good.

Very good to remember. If you're not sure what God's will is for you today, because he says this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus, RPT, Rejoice, Pray, Give Thanks. But a lot of people also don't continue reading.

I think something important for us to repeat is make sure we're not grieving the Holy Spirit, like he says in verse 19. Don't grieve the Holy Spirit. That means the Holy Spirit is a person.

If I was to say to you, don't grieve your wife, don't grieve your husband, I think we would all, if you're married, you would all understand what that means. That means don't do, that means that that person has feelings and don't do anything that would cause them grief inside of them. And it's just like that.

The Holy Spirit is a person and you can say he has spiritual feelings, not emotional feelings, but spiritual feelings that certain things that he sees in our hearts, certain ways of behavior, certain motives, certain attitudes, certain goals and ambitions, certain ways of thinking that grieve him. And he says, oh, I don't feel comfortable here in this home or in this marriage or in this workplace where this person who calls himself or herself a believer is, or in this church meeting. And I want to be absolutely certain, I've been checking my own heart, dear brothers and sisters, and that's where this message, this burden is coming from.

I thought I would share with you all as well, that there's never anything I'm doing that is making the Spirit of Christ uncomfortable. I want Jesus to feel so comfortable that he comes right in, that he was in my church meeting before I even got there, and he was ready for me because he knew my heart was ready for him. And so anytime you meet, dear brothers and sisters, God sees our hearts.

The Holy Spirit searches our hearts and he sees what's deep within. Nobody else may be able to see it, but he sees what's there, what motive I have, maybe some selfish ambition or some jealousy or some bitterness or unforgiveness or I look at somebody else and what they have, how God has blessed them, the kind of job they have or the kind of spouse they have, the kind of children they have. And I can be jealous of that, all these things the Holy Spirit sees.

And if he sees something that grieves him, maybe he'll come there, but he'll come there and see to the meeting and see if I'm going to repent of it. He'll speak to me. He'll remind me of it.

He'll put his finger on that thing that's hidden deep within, and he'll see if I'm willing to repent of it. And if I am, then he'll say, okay, I'm not grieved anymore because you've repented. In fact, there's joy in heaven when there's repentance, we believe.

So here are a few things that I thought of which I would share with you. And also, the Holy Spirit is a gentleman. He doesn't force himself upon us.

He's not like a judge or he's not like a heavy-handed person that's forcing himself upon us. He knocks gently. He puts his finger on a particular part of our heart and says, are you willing to give that up? Will you allow me to cleanse you of that attitude and that motive, that secret thing? And if I don't, he'll quietly leave.

And I believe, you know, there was a time in 1 Samuel where Eli was the priest and it says this word, Ichabod, which means the glory has departed. It means the presence of God has left the place. The priest was still doing their things.

They're still having their meetings, but the glory had departed. And I never want it to be said of me, my personal life, because my body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. God wants to find a home there, first of all.

Then he wants to find a home in our marriages. He wants to find a home in our homes, in our relationships with our children and our parents. Then he wants to find a home in every local church gathering.

And I never want it to be said in any area of these circles, in any of these circles that I just described, that God, that it would have to be said, the glory has departed. The Holy Spirit's left. The people are there.

I believe that even at this moment, Sunday morning in this country, or perhaps in other countries around the world at this time, and many people who are holding Bibles, taking the name of Jesus, but Jesus himself is not there. And I never want that to be the case in my life. The first thing I'd like to say is, if you turn with me to 1 Chronicles 17, things that would make Christ uncomfortable in our church.

First of all, if there isn't a soul desire for God's name to be magnified. If my only desire in my church gathering is not only for God's name to be magnified, then Christ says, I'm not comfortable here. If you've got some other motive, if there's any other motive in building a church, other than that the name of God would be magnified, then Christ is not comfortable in such a gathering.

We see this story in 1 Chronicles 17 that I alluded to, 1 Chronicles 17. Verse one, it came about when David dwelt in his house. Look at the state that David's in.

He's had a comfortable life. He's defeated all his enemies. It's a time of peace and rest.

And when David dwelt in his house, that David said to Nathan the prophet, behold, I am dwelling in a house of cedar, but the ark of the covenant of the Lord is under curtains. Then Nathan was, well, let's not blame him, but he thought, oh, this sounds great. David, what a great idea.

You want to build a house for God, do all that is in your heart for God is with you. Do all that is in your heart for God is with you. And this motive may seem good.

Yes, Lord, I want to do something for your kingdom. But what Nathan didn't have the discernment to realize was that it was out of David's pride that he was saying, oh, I've got a lot of money. I'm pretty comfortable.

I have a nice house for myself. I've got all this leftover time and money. Why don't I do something for God? There's a lot of Christians like that.

They've retired, or their life's pretty comfortable. The children have grown up, and things are pretty well established. And he says, oh, yeah, you know, I guess I should start thinking about eternity now.

Let me give something to God. God does not accept such a sacrifice. Now, it doesn't mean that it's too late.

It's the motive. It's the attitude. It came about, verse 3, the same night that God spoke to Nathan.

See, what Nathan should have done was when he heard David say, oh, you want to build a, I want to build a temple, Nathan should have said, let me go ask God first of all, because God speaks to me. I'm the prophet. Nathan was deceived even by David, what he seemed to be a very religious person, and he was the king, and he seemed to be a God-fearing man, and he was, but David was misled.

And finally, at night, God comes to Nathan and says, listen, let me paraphrase first of all what God is about to tell Nathan. Who does David think he is that he can build a house for me? I know he's successful. I know he's a king, and he's defeated all his enemies, and he's in peace, and I know his heart is good, but he could never build a house for me.

I'm the one that put him there. I'm the one that put him on the throne. He could never build a house for me.

I will build a house for him. That's what God tells Nathan, tells David through Nathan. So, God, that same night, the word of God came to Nathan saying, go and tell David, my servant, thus says the Lord, you shall not build a house for me to dwell in.

Have you heard the word of the Lord? This really pierced me to the heart. I said, Lord, I want to build your church, and God says, no, you won't build my church. I will build my church.

And I say that as somebody whom God has called to be an elder and to have responsibility, not only in my marriage and home, but in the church that I'm a part of, and a few other churches I help with. But this is a word the Lord specifically spoke to me. It says, Santos, don't you ever think that you're building my church.

You shall not build a house for me to dwell in. For I have not dwelt in a house since the day that I brought up Israel to this day, but I have gone from tent to tent and from one dwelling place to another. In all places where I've walked with all Israel, have I spoken a word with any of the judges of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people, saying, why have you not built for me a house of cedar? In other words, God saying, all these years, David, long before you, there were godly men like Samuel and the prophets before, the judges before that.

I never once complained about the house because it doesn't matter to me what the house looks like. I just want a place where I can be comfortable. I just want a heart that's pure.

And David, you have that heart. That was enough for me. Now, therefore, thus says, thus shall you say to my servant, David, thus says the Lord of hosts, don't forget where you came from, David.

Don't forget who you were when I picked you up, lest you think that somehow you are qualified to build my church. Thus says the Lord of hosts, I took you from the pasture. This is verse eight.

Now, verse seven, from following the sheep, you were just a, you know what a shepherd is? A stinky person. You hang out with sheep all day. You start to smell pretty bad.

You smell like them. That's who you were, David. I picked you up from that and I put you to be the leader over the people of Israel.

Don't forget that. I have been with you wherever you've gone and have cut off all your enemies from before you. Don't you think that you defeated the enemies? I defeated them.

And I will make you a name like the name of the great ones who are in the earth. I will appoint a place for my people, Israel, and I will plant them so that they may dwell in their own place and not be moved again. And the wicked will not waste them anymore as formerly, even from the day that I commanded judges to be over my people, Israel, and I will subdue all your enemies.

Moreover, I tell you that the Lord will build a house for you. When we see that it is the Lord who's doing the building, the Lord who has all responsibility and all authority and all control and all government, he, everything belongs to him. Whatever he does is right.

Whether I think it's right or not, this is God's will. And then he says, listen, when your days are fulfilled, let's continue reading, that you must go to be with your fathers that I will set up one of your descendants after you who will be of your sons and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build for me a house and I will establish his throne forever.

And this is the word the Lord spoke to me. Santosh, if I ever, I imagine this conversation where the Lord came to me and said, Santosh, I don't want you to be an elder here at the church anymore. I'm going to ask somebody else to do that.

What will my response be? And I'll say, well, Lord, I've sacrificed so much. I've done so much. I've built your church.

I've met, I've encouraged people. I've preached the word. I've prayed.

I've fasted. I've done everything. I've come early.

I've stayed late. God says, no, I will build my church and I'll choose whom I use to build my church. And if I say, I've used you for a purpose.

Now I want somebody else. Okay. It's perfectly okay.

Let's skip down to verse 16. After David gets this response, look at David's heart. Oh, I love his heart.

Yeah. He was a bit lifted up in pride initially. And then God spoke to him through Nathan.

Remember when God spoke to him through Nathan about his sin? David was so blind. He didn't even see how serious his sin was. He knew he had sinned.

He covered it up, but he thought he got away with it. And then he forgot about it. And then when Nathan came and told him the story, he didn't even realize it was him.

But the moment he realized it was him, the moment he saw his sin, he repented. He put his face in the dust and humbled himself. That's why God could still use him.

That's why Jesus is off the line of David. God didn't forsake him in his pride. God gave him a chance to repent.

And look at David's response. Verse 16. Then David the king went in and sat before the Lord and said, who am I? Oh Lord God, what is my house? Who am I? I'm sorry that I had such pride.

Verse 17, this was a small thing in your eyes of God, but you have spoken of your servant's house for a great while. Verse 18, what more? Look at David's heart and perhaps sometime you can go back and read this whole chapter and see the repentance and the humility and the brokenness with which David returns to the Lord. What more can David still say to you concerning the honor bestowed on your servant? For you know your servants.

Oh Lord, for your servant's sake and according to your own heart, you have wrought all this greatness to make known all these great things. Oh Lord, there is none like you, nor is there any God besides you, according to all that we have heard with our years. And what one nation in the earth is like your people, Israel, whom God went to redeem for himself as a people, to make you a name by great and terrible things in driving out nations from before your people whom you redeemed out of Egypt.

For your people, Israel, you made your own people forever and you, oh Lord, became their God. Now, oh Lord, let the word that you have spoken concerning your servant and concerning his house be established forever and do as you have spoken. Oh, you see the heart of David.

He had such a desire to do something great for God. God said, no, I'm going to use somebody else. He said, yes.

And this is the verse I wanted you to see. Verse 24, let your name be established and magnified forever, saying the Lord of hosts is the God of Israel, even a God to Israel and the house of David, your servant is established before you. This is why God said, okay, David, I'm going to still use your seed.

I'm still going to use your son, Solomon, because for David, it didn't matter. And I believe for David, if God had said, I'm going to use some other person unrelated to you, it would have been fine. David's heart was verse 24.

Remember this dear brothers and sisters. I believe it's all of our desire to build a church wherever we are gathered, whether it's there in Atlanta or here in Loveland or anywhere else, that the name of God would be magnified and established forever. Make this your prayer.

Pray if you can set it even as your goal for this week, every day, say, Lord, let your name be established and magnified here in our local church. Let your name be established and magnified here in our local church. I'm going to pray that.

I have a renewed desire to pray that prayer. And finally, the church does get built. Let's look at that quickly.

2nd Chronicles chapter 6. After the church is built, Solomon, after the temple is built, 2nd Chronicles chapter 6, verse 1, Solomon said, the Lord has said that he would dwell in the thick cloud. I built you a lofty house and a place for your dwelling forever. And they prayed, blessed, verse 4, blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel.

But this is the verse I wanted you to see. Verse 7, now it was in the heart of my father David to build a house for the name of the Lord, the God of Israel. But the Lord said to my father David, because it was in your heart to build a house for my name, you did well that it was in your heart.

And see that God doesn't even condemn. We saw how God showed David his pride, but God redeemed the good desire that he had when David repented. God still built his church.

David repented of his pride and God said, okay, you've repented of your pride. That desire, it was actually good. I'll turn it into good.

See what wonderful things God does when we repent of our pride, when we humble ourselves, when we, you know, and often that pride is mixed in with good desires. We have a good desire to raise godly children or to have a good marriage or something else. And then in the midst of that, God shows us that pride is mixed in with it.

And then he says, repent of that pride. And God doesn't want to destroy that good desire. He wants to set you free from that pride.

And the moment that pride is forsaken, God says, that desire was good. I'll use that. And he still built the temple.

And today that's how God will build his church as well. The second thing, so that is where there isn't a soul desire for God's name to be magnified, Christ is not comfortable. The second thing I wanted to mention is if you turn with me to Isaiah chapter 66, where there is no genuine humility, where there's no genuine humility.

And earlier I was talking about a humility towards God, you can say, that I don't want my name at all involved in this Lord. It's just your name. You can, you know, often people today, we live in a Christendom where so many people are using Christianity as a platform for their own name.

They learn how to preach, how to speak like the famous speakers. They take speaking classes and think that that's how they can become better preachers. They practice their instruments and learn to play like the worldly musicians so that the music in the church sounds just like the music in the world.

The spirit of the world has come and taken over the spirit of the churches. And Christ is not there, not at all. You think Christ could have anything to do with the music of this world and the preaching styles of this world and the drawing attention to themselves and the strobe lights and the fog machines and all that, which are imitating the concerts of the world.

Christ has left those churches a long time ago. So this, I was talking earlier about a spirit of humility towards God, have his name alone magnified, not my name. It doesn't matter if somebody quotes me and what I said.

No, was Jesus Christ preached? This was Paul's attitude. If Christ is preached, it doesn't matter if they quote me or not. I don't need my name involved in it.

The spirit humility now I want to talk about is humility towards others, where I think of others as more important than myself. That's the definition of humility. Let me show you that very quickly so you see it in Philippians chapter 2. I'll come back to Isaiah 66 here in a second.

Humility is this, Philippians 2 verses 3 and 4, Philippians 2 verses 3 and 4, do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind, that means humility is a way of thinking. What does that look like? Regard one another as more important than yourselves, not merely looking out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. So how you think about others, whether you think of every single person as more important than yourself, then you're really humble.

If there's even one person that you think I'm more important than that person, then you've got a little bit of pride. Let's go to Isaiah 66. We read in verse 1, thus says the Lord, again these words, this is the quotation that Stephen gave, thus says the Lord, heaven is my throne and the earth is my footstool.

Where then is a house you could build for me and where is a place that I may rest? For my hand made all these things, thus all these things came into being, declares the Lord. Now what Stephen didn't quote was what the book of what Isaiah did say. God did make it clear what kind of building does he want then, and then he says to this one I will look to him who is humble and contrite of spirit.

Oh dear brothers and sisters, will you make this your prayer? Lord, I want genuine humility, humble and contrite in spirit. That means it's in your way of thinking, it's in your attitude, it's in your motive, it's not speaking gently and quietly or walking with your head down looking humble. I tell you that most humble people that I've met don't always look necessarily look humble on the outside or sound humble on the outside, but you see the humility and how they regard others as more important than themselves, especially with eternity, that they have their eternal good in mind.

So thinking of others as more important than ourselves, this is the one with whom God will dwell. I think of a church gathering, making Christ comfortable. I see that, I think of it like this, that in a church building, let's say, they were gathered in or even like this where some of us are online, Jesus is looking to be close, to sit next to the one who is genuinely humble and contrite.

You know if there's some important person came into the church, I think somebody who's earthly minded would think, oh I hope there's a seat next to me, I hope he'll come sit next to me, I hope she'll come sit next to me, what an honor that would be if they come sit next to me. Think about Jesus, who's the head of the church, the most important person, who will he sit next to? Who will he come and sit next to? It's the one who is genuinely humble and contrite. It may not be who you think it is, it may not be the most important person or the people up front, it could be the one who's very quiet, doesn't get to say much, but Jesus is sitting next to them and oh would you value this? And I say this as one who has to get up almost every Sunday, I have to get up in front and do something and yet this is the spirit I want to have.

So it's not about whether you're in front or in the back or in the middle or you're sitting or standing or kneeling, it's in your spirit. Is there genuine humility? Do you go through the members of the church and think, yep that brother more important than me, that sister more important than me, that child more important than me. This is the spirit of genuine humility and contriteness.

Psalms 34 talks about those who are crushed in spirit. Let's look at that very quickly. Psalm 34, the memory verse that we just started with was many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all.

That's verse 19. What does it mean to be righteous? I see it in the previous verse, verse 18. The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.

This is what being contrite and humble in spirit is. That means you're crushed. What would you be like if you are crushed in spirit? You know when I've been crushed in spirit, I can tell you very easily, is when I've sinned in some way and I realize my sin.

Oh I'm so crushed. I think, man I can't believe I sinned like that. Why did I respond with that tone of voice? I'm so, I'm beating myself up.

I'm crushed in spirit. Now can you be, and now imagine that that you came to the church meeting and you just remember that you sinned so horribly. Now would you look down on anybody else in the church? Would you be offended if you don't get to lead the singing? If nobody asks you to speak or nobody asks you to pray, would you be offended? No, your thoughts would be on, I can't believe I sinned.

I'm crushed in spirit. Now think about having that same mind, that same attitude, even if you haven't sinned. I hope we're not all continually living in sin.

That's not God's will for us, but God's will for us is to remain crushed in spirit even when we are living in victory, even as we continue to become more like Christ. Because that's how Christ was. You read later on in Philippians 2 verse 5 that this is the attitude Christ had.

Christ was crushed in spirit even though he never sinned. He treated everybody, he regarded everybody as more important than himself and yet he never sinned. This is humility and it says the Lord saves those who are crushed in spirit.

Ask God to give you a revelation. I really find my words are not enough in situations like this to describe what being crushed in spirit really is like, but I want it. I've had moments I believe when I've experienced it and I long for that to be my constant state.

I'm constantly crushed in spirit. Then I know I'll always be saved. I can never have a bad mood.

I can never have a bad attitude. I can never think evil thoughts towards others because I'm crushed in spirit. Isaiah 57, here's another verse, verse 15, similar words to what we just read in Isaiah 66.

Isaiah 57 verse 15, thus says the high and exalted one who lives forever, whose name is holy. I dwell on a high and holy place and also with the contrite and lowly. There's that word crushed, contrite, crushed.

I live in a high and holy place. Well, that's heaven. But where am I on earth? With those who are crushed lowly of spirit.

For what reason? To revive the spirit of the lowly, to revive the heart of the contrite, the crushed. Do you want revival? We hear about revival much in Christendom today. Oh, we're having revival meetings.

I tell you, you don't need revival meetings. You just need to be crushed. You just need to be lowly and revival will come.

You think God doesn't, you know, we have these prayer meetings for revival. I hear about it. Let's pray for revival.

No, let's humble ourselves and revival will come. Let's genuinely be crushed. Revival will come.

God wants to send revival. I read in this verse. He wants to send revival.

I don't need to pray and fast for it. No, I'm not against praying and fasting. Yes, let's pray and fast for what? To repent of our pride.

That if there are people, if there's pride in my life, if there's pride in my marriage, if there's pride in my home, if there's pride in my children, if there's pride in anybody in our church, then that God would come and show it and we'd repent of it. That's what the prayer and fasting should be for. That I would repent of

this pride and then revival will come.

You know, you know how these, sometimes when I think about these prayer, these revival meetings, I think of Mount Carmel in first Kings 18, where the prophets of Baal and were crying and crying and crying, and they cut themselves with knives and they hours and hours and hours and hours and hours begging their God, come send the fire, send the fire. And Elijah was a broken man. He was crushed.

He was on the run. He had just been on the run. The queen wanted to kill him.

God had sent him as a prophet to these people and he was crushed, but he had authority because he was crushed. And he prayed what? For about 45 seconds, I think. And revival came, fire came.

And he's a great example for us. It's not how long you pray, dear brothers and sisters for revival to come in your own heart. It's, do you see your own pride? Do you, are you willing to be crushed in spirit, to be humble? And you know what? Thankfully God uses circumstances in our life often to crush us.

And I've come to see, I love those, I've come to love those trials in my life that we were hearing about earlier, even trials in our life because they have crushed me. And in a sense, it's the only way by which God could put me in that place where he could send revival. I went through a trial in my life almost four years ago.

It was intensely difficult in some senses. Now, compared to what a lot of other believers have faced and what Jesus faced, it's nothing. It's just a little ant bite.

But for at that time, it was, it was difficult for me, but I tell you brothers and sisters, God brought such revival into my life through it. I see the fruit of it now continuing on. I believe it will continue on for years to come.

And perhaps God will need to take me to an even deeper level of revival and walk with him. And for that, he may need to allow me to go through an even deeper crushing than I did. And I'm not afraid of it anymore.

I welcome it. I say, Lord, I want you, I want your presence. I want you to be comfortable here.

And if there's even a small hidden level of pride that I don't even see, please crush me, Lord, crush me completely so that I can see that pride that's there. And all your presence will be with me. I tell you, brothers and sisters, you will see a dramatic change in your life, in your personal life.

You'll see a dramatic change in your marriage. You'll see a dramatic change in your home life with your children. You'll see a dramatic change in your church life.

I can testify to all of these areas, not with any pride at all. I did nothing to deserve it, except I was a horrible sinner, and I had so much pride, and God revealed it to me by crushing me. And I never want to go back to any of that pride.

I want to remain contrite. I want to remain crushed. So where there's no genuine humility, where we're not genuinely crushed, by genuinely, I mean that it's there inside where God sees it.

Then Christ is not comfortable. The third thing I want to see you see is also in Isaiah 66, in the latter part of that verse, where Christ is not comfortable, things that make Christ uncomfortable in our church. We read

the middle part of verse two, which says, to him who is humble and crushed in spirit.

And he says, secondly, or this is our third point, where God's word is not treated with reverence, where God's word is not treated with reverence. It says, to him who trembles at my word. Have you ever heard God's word preached and it shook you? It trembled.

I've had one or two rare experiences where I was shaken physically. I was shaking because God's word convicted me so deeply. But he's not necessarily talking about physical shaking in your heart.

I've had plenty of experiences, even recently, even thinking about these things that I'm sharing with you. There was a trembling in my heart at God's word. It says, Lord, these words that are in the Bible, they've been there for thousands of years.

These words I'm reading in Isaiah 66, they've been there for 3,000 years or so, almost over 2,000 years. I missed it. And thank you, Lord, that you allowed me to see it.

Because otherwise, I would be trembling at the judgment seat of Christ that these words were there in the Bible, that God had warned me about pride and warned me about having a reverence for him and warned me about only seeking his name to be magnified. And I never knew it. And I want to have a real reverence for God's word, never to use God's word to cut other people, as a sword to cut up other people, but to bring it on my own flesh, that I would allow God to pierce me through and through with his word.

And that the prophetic preaching of God's word would have this effect in his church, where God's word is not treated with reverence. And oh, I see so much of this going on in Christendom today, where hardly people don't bring their Bibles to church meetings, first of all. It's common.

I think you go to 99% of churches, you'll find that the vast majority of people, maybe 75% or more, don't even have a Bible sitting in their meetings. How are we going to tremble at God's word if we don't spend time in it? And yeah, read it during the day, during the week, of course. But you know, as a child, I'll tell you honestly, I didn't have a very consistent Bible reading habit.

I wish I did now. I look back, but I can't undo the things of the past, the times of ignorance God overlooks. But now he says, repent.

And so I value God's word now. But I'll tell you this, I was blessed to be in a church and to be in a home where my parents and the elders in the church told me to bring my Bible to church meetings and told me to turn to the verses when the speaker was speaking the verses. And simply by doing that, simply by opening my Bible and turning to the verse, even if I was sometimes distracted, looking around, my thoughts were there, I just was asked to turn to the verse and look at it.

So much of God's word came into my mind. And there are so many verses I look back and remember now that come to my mind that I know came through just simply listening to the verses, to the teaching in the meeting. That's a good way to start.

If you struggle with a consistent Bible habit, a very simple thing you can do is anytime you hear somebody preaching, you're sitting in a meeting, turn to every single verse and look at it in your Bible. And look at the context if you can. And pay attention, of course, to what the speaker is saying.

And then go back. And sometimes if you don't know where to read, read what the Sunday message was on. Read those verses.

Listen to the message again if you can. But we all have a Bible and we have no excuse that we shouldn't know God's word. Jesus said in John chapter 14 verse 23, if anyone loves me, he will keep my word.

You see that? If anyone loves me, he will keep my word. You say you love Jesus? Okay, Jesus made it very clear. Keep my word.

And my father will love him and we will come to him and make our dwelling place with him. You see that? I say I love Jesus. He says, okay, before I can come and make my dwelling place with you, I want to see that you keep my word.

See that progression? Loving God, keeping his word, which begins with knowing his word, reverencing his word, and then obeying his word. Then he says, my father will love you. And we'll come and be there in your church meeting.

You don't have to beg us. You don't have to cry and say, Lord, we hope you'll be here in our meeting. I will be there.

I'll come. I already know that you love me and that you keep my word. But there's a lot of people say, I love you, Lord.

And I lift my voice to worship you. I love you. But they don't keep his word.

And God says, okay, I can't come there to that church meeting. If you reverence, if you have a reverence, tremble at my word. And this reverence is, you know, some people, I remember hearing about a preacher who told his followers that whenever you read the Bible, you must do it on your knees to have a reverence for God's word.

Now, that may be a good thing. I'm not necessarily advocating that. But we must value this book.

And, you know, some people are also very careful not to put any book on top of this book in the bookshelf. Yeah, it's okay if that results in a value of the actual word. But it's not enough just to say, okay, you know, don't drop the Bible.

Don't treat it carelessly. Make sure it's sitting on top of the other books. If despite all of that, I still don't tremble at God's actual word and obey him, then it's just a ritual.

And the reason we tremble at God's word is because we have a reverence for God. And Jesus said in Matthew 5, verse 19, this is what it means to, you know, how you know that you reverence God's word is how do you treat the little commandments? It's not the big commandments. If you really tremble at God's word, you know, you'll do it when you think it's well, is that really a big thing? It's a small thing.

It's a small thing, right? It proves that you don't really reverence God's word. A reverence for God's word is not proved in the big commands like don't divorce your wife, don't kill anybody, don't commit adultery, or even don't lust and don't get angry. For some of us, you know, we hear newcomer teachings.

So we know those are actually big commands, because they'll send us to hell, Jesus said in Matthew 5. But the small commands, where, you know, I know a lot of people have put off baptism, because they're

afraid of offending their relatives. They come from maybe backgrounds where they were sprinkled as children or something like that, and they'll offend their relatives if they get baptized. And so that's it, you know, can I still go to heaven if I don't take baptism, water baptism, adult immersion, or the practice of women covering their head when they pray or prophesy, men not covering their head when they pray or prophesy.

Most of Christendom says, that's a small thing, why do you harp on it, you know, look at all these Christians, do you think they're going to hell? I don't know who's going to heaven or who's going to hell, God knows. But it's a small command, it might seem like a small command. Now, actually, I think it's a big command, because he speaks about the glory of God in his church in 1 Corinthians 11.

And I want that, I want God to be magnified and glorified. And I don't want self to be exalted. And that's what the head covering for women and not covering your head for men represents.

And it's so plainly there, it's a big command for me. But whether the world calls it big or small, it's all big, because it's a big God, I reverence Him. He is great, He is to be glorified.

And His word is important, no matter how small or big I might think it is. A king, if he said, I want a cup of water, that's just as important. They'll quickly run, get a glass of water, as if he says, now we're going to go attack that other country.

Whatever he says, they obey immediately. Because there's a fear of the king, he might chop my head off if I don't get him that glass of water. God's not going to chop your head off, but he sees, he sees, oh, you're not really, you don't take my word seriously.

When it says, don't be anxious for anything, yeah, you shrug your shoulders. When he says, don't grumble or complain, you say, oh, I can't really live that way. When he says, don't be jealous, don't have bitterness, don't have any unforgiveness towards anyone.

Most people shrug their shoulders at it. Christians, so-called Christians. And God says, I'm sorry, I can't be in your church meeting.

If you hold on to that bitterness, unforgiveness, bad motives, attitudes, let's tremble at God's word. The fourth thing I want to say is where there is no sense of need. If God sees that we don't have a sense of need, he won't be there in our midst.

He's not comfortable there in our midst. Please turn to Revelation chapter 3. I don't know, you know, we're told about seven churches in Revelations chapter 2 and chapter 3. Two of them were good, the church in Smyrna and the church in Philadelphia, you read in chapter 2 and in chapter 3. With the remaining five, with four of them, it's possible that Christ was still there in their church meetings because he says to some of them, I'm going to remove your lampstand if you don't repent. That means I'm going to take away the presence of the Holy Spirit from your midst.

I won't be there. You can still meet, but I won't be there. But with one of them, he's not even there.

He's already left. That's the last church, the church in Laodicea. And you may be surprised, you know, the other churches, they had the spirit of Jezebel, they had the teaching of the Nicolaitans, they had false doctrine, they'd left their first love.

And you think, what was so serious about the church in Laodicea that Jesus had already left? If you ask most churches today, they may think, oh, they were committing adultery or fornication or love of money. No, it doesn't say any of those things. You know what it was? They didn't have a sense of need.

Look at this. Verse 17, Revelation 3, verse 17. Because you say, I'm rich, I've become wealthy, I have need of nothing.

I don't need anything. Yeah, I'm good. I'm ready.

Jesus, you can come right now and take me home. I'm ready. I tell you, I live today in a constant sense of need.

I don't want Jesus to take me home yet. I'll tell you why. Not because I love this earth.

It's because I don't think I'm ready. I'm quite fully Christ-like yet. I've not yet been made into the image of Christ.

And if he calls me home today, I will never have any more opportunity to repent and to be conformed to the image of Jesus. God cannot work in me to make me more like Christ once I get there in heaven. It's only while I'm here on this earth, I say, Lord, I want to value the few short years I have left.

Can you wait a little bit longer so that I will repent even more and humble myself even more and have even more dependence on you so that you can conform me so that you can finish the work? But I do have this faith. I tell you, dear brothers and sisters, because I live in that constant sense of need, I believe when I see Jesus, I will be like him. He told me that in 1 John 3, verse 3. When I see him, I will be like him.

I have this faith. I have this hope fixed on him. And so I continue to remain in the sense of need with the hope that when Jesus does finally call me home, he will have finished the work.

And so I remain in the sense of need. The result of this need you see is in verse 15 was Jesus said to them, I know your deeds that you're neither cold nor hot. I wish that you were cold or hot.

So because you are lukewarm and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth. Because you're neither hot nor cold. And so when we don't have a sense of need, you know what the condition looks like? It's a little bit of heat and a little bit of cold.

Yeah, I come to the church meetings. I sit there. I pray and I read my Bible and they ask me to say something.

I say something and I'm coasting in my Christian life. And I've taken up with the things of this world and the interests of this world and the issues of this world, but not really taken up the kingdom of God. I'm not seeking to go lower in humility.

I'm comfortable. Yeah, I don't have a lot of pride, but not, you know, I'm a little better than that person. That's lukewarm.

A lukewarm person when it comes to pride is one who thinks there's at least somebody underneath in loneliness, in their own mind. That's a lukewarm person. A hot person is one who says, I'm all the way at the bottom.

Everybody is more important than me. That's heat. The heat of humility.

Oh, I want that. I want to be fiery in humility where there's not even one person I think of as more important than myself. And if you really examine your heart, as I examine my heart, I see I'm not there.

And so there's a sense of need. I say, Lord, I need to go down. There's a song we used to sing.

Oh, how we need to be established here in humility. To be more humble is our greatest need. How we need to be established in this humility.

I want that life, dear brothers and sisters, to be humble. To have a sense of need. Constantly have a sense of need.

The last one I'll say is in Ephesians chapter two, if you'll turn that with me. Number five, where God cannot establish his peace. Where God cannot establish his peace.

See, God wants his church to be a place of peace. There should always be peace among brothers, between husband and wife, between parents and children. Our homes, our lives, first of all, must be lives of peace.

The peace of Christ, which surpasses understanding, will keep our souls, we're told, in Colossians chapter three. The peace must be there in our marriages. Peace.

Even if your spouse wants to fight, you don't fight. Then there'll be peace. There may be unrest in their heart, but never fighting.

Peace in the marriage means that at least one person has put down the sword and refuses to fight. Unity comes when both people put down the sword and don't fight, but at least peace. Peace in the home, that means children with the parents, parents with the children, never fighting.

Yes, establish your authority, but never getting into arguments and verbal fighting, let alone physical fighting. It goes on in even some Christian homes. Peace in the home.

Yes, don't relinquish your authority, and if the only way for there to be peace is if for an adult child to have to leave the home, then so be it. Hopefully, the child, if they're an adult and living at home, can still remain in peace, respecting the authority of the parents, but if the only way for there to be peace is that the parents have to tell the adult daughter or son you have to leave the home because there's no peace in the home and we will not compromise on peace, you need to go find another place to live. Some parents have had to make that decision, and it's turned out good.

I've seen it happen over and over again, but peace, there's always to be peace, and likewise in the church. If Christ sees that there's a lack of peace between brothers, between sisters, within the church, he says, I don't feel comfortable here. There's no peace.

Do everything you can to preserve peace, and here we see in Ephesians chapter 2, we'll begin reading in verse 11. Remember Ephesians 2 11. Remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh, were called uncircumcision by the so-called circumcision, which is performed in the flesh by human hands.

Remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. So you, the Jews,

treated the others without peace. They were their enemies, and that's how God had it, and so there was peace in Israel, but peace, but God was saying, but these are all my creation.

Even the Amalekites and the Amorites, they were just a picture of the peace that I wanted to bring through Christ for all of mankind, Jews and Gentiles, and that's what Paul says then in the next verse. You know, you read in the Bible about the Amalekites and the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites. You know, all of that is us.

I don't think any of us are Jews, so when God was telling them to be severe, to defeat all their enemies, it was us who were the enemies. The Jews were God's chosen people, and what I understand the Holy Spirit telling me through this is, remember, you were once upon a time the enemy of the Israelites, and then Christ came and made peace. Now why would you want to go back and build a dividing wall and make somebody else your enemy again and fight with them, your husband or your wife or your brother or sister? Christ broke down the dividing wall.

That's what we're going to read. Verse 13, now in Christ Jesus, you who formerly were enemies, were far off, have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace.

You know how Jesus is there in a home? How Jesus is there in a marriage? How Jesus is there in the church? He himself is our peace. There's peace there. He himself is our peace who made both groups into one.

Jews and Gentiles, as opposite as you could imagine, made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall by abolishing in his flesh the enmity. You know, it says he crucified sin in the flesh. The way to the most holy place is through the veil, which is Christ's flesh.

The only way we can get into the most holy place, which is the dwelling place of God, is through this peace. He established peace, abolishing in his flesh the enmity of peace. Are you willing, dear brothers and sisters, to walk with Christ through the flesh, abolishing the enemy of peace? What is the enemy of peace? Dissatisfaction, argumentativeness, jealousy, bitterness, evil speaking, bad thoughts, gossip.

These are all the enemies of peace, and they must be crucified in the flesh. Christ must be manifest in all his peace. By abolishing in his flesh the enmity, which is the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so that in himself he might make the two into one new man.

This is the church. The two groups, or three groups, or four groups, or whatever number of groups, are made into one new man, thus establishing peace. Look at how he keeps harping on peace.

He's not talking about love. He's not talking about joy. He's talking about peace.

And might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross by it having put to death the enmity. And he came and preached peace to you who were far away, and peace to those who were near. Irrespective of which side of the fence you are in the argument, he preached peace.

For through him we both have our access in one spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens. That with the saints, and are of God's household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole building being fitted together is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together through this peace into the place where God can dwell in the spirit.

You see how now God has a place. He says there used to be turmoil. They used to be fighting about this, and this little thing, and that little thing.

Oh, I want to do this, or he wants to do that. And all these denominations are full of this fighting. And then God sees two who are willing to be made one in peace.

They're quite opposite from each other. And then three who are being willing to be made one in peace. Four, five, God builds a little body and says, ah, I can come here and be at home.

I can live here. This is the dwelling place God desires. Dear brothers and sisters, you know, it says, let's turn quickly to Isaiah chapter nine.

This is the prophecy about the coming of Christ. The prophecy of the coming of Christ, verse six, Isaiah nine, verse six. A child will be born to us, a son will be given to us, and the government will rest on his shoulders.

I mean, Jesus has all authority in the church, yes, but also in the world. All authority has been given to him. He's ultimately in control of everything.

And his name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, and the Prince of Peace. And when it talked about his government, you know, the authority, how does Jesus establish his authority? We read in verse seven, there will be no end to the increase of his authority or government or of peace. There will be no end to the increase of peace in the church.

Oh, what a wonderful goal to set for ourselves. For your marriage, first of all, say, Lord, this is my prayer for the next year of my marriage, that peace will just grow, no end to the increase of peace. Make this a prayer for your home.

Lord, in my home, I pray for the next year, there will be no end to the increase of peace. There's no fighting at all, much less fighting than there was yesterday, hopefully not at all. And then in the church as well, make this, if you're a part of that local church, dear brothers and sisters, fight for the church and say, Lord, I pray that this next year, 2022, will be characterized that there will be no end to the increase of peace in this church, in our homes and in our marriages.

Yeah, I think I'll end there. Let me just mention these five again so you can reflect on what we heard and think about it or write it down. We're thinking about making, you know, things that make Christ uncomfortable in our dwelling places, especially in the church.

First of all, where there isn't the sole desire for God's name to be magnified. That's not my only desire. Secondly, if there isn't genuine humility in being crushed, genuine humility that comes through crushing.

Thirdly, where God's Word is not treated with reverence. And fourthly, where there's no sense of need in us. That's an individual thing.

And fifthly, where He cannot establish His peace. I pray that the Lord will do that for us, for all of us, dear brothers and sisters, especially there in the local church. Let's pray.

Father, I thank You for Your Word. Thank You that Your heart is for us. Thank You even to that church in Laodicea.

You said, those whom You love, You discipline and rebuke. We know You love us, Lord, especially when You rebuke us and correct us. And thank You for correcting me even as I meditated on these words and showing me areas in which I can go lower and reverence Your Word more and have a greater sense of need and establish peace in all circumstances.

Help me, Lord. Help us all and bless these dear brothers and sisters. Thank You so much for placing this church there to be a witness and a lighthouse there in that dark city of Atlanta.

So much sin and so much religiosity. I pray, Lord, You'll continue to establish that church there as a pure testimony for Your name's sake. Strengthen each brother and sister and child and grip their hearts, grip all of our hearts with Your purpose for Your church.

We believe You will do that. Thank You. Bless the elders there, Lord, and bless every family, every brother, sister, and child we ask in Jesus' name.

Amen.

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