

Blinded By Pride!

by Shane Idleman

This sermon delves into the importance of repentance, returning to one's first love, and overcoming pride in order to experience the fullness of the Holy Spirit. It emphasizes the need to have a heart filled with love, joy, peace, contentment, gentleness, kindness, and self-control, rather than just head knowledge or works. The message highlights the dangers of harboring sin, the significance of remembering where one has fallen, and the call to listen to the promptings of the Holy Spirit for personal transformation.

Scripture: Revelation 2:4, Galatians 5:22, James 4:6, Matthew 13:23, Revelation 2:7

Topics: "Repentance", "Transformation through the Holy Spirit"

Description

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Transcript

Tribulation, Antichrist, Mark of the Beast. And I'm getting there, but laying the foundation is very important. Because once we get there, we need to be prepared.

And I do want to share my heart, I shared it at the first service a little bit, I've been praying about it still, because I don't know, sometimes, you know, I want to be careful with things. But some people have gotten a little upset at me because I don't embrace their view of eschatology, necessarily. And I've always said this, for 22 years now, just about, but more concretely after 13 years, I don't have a firm position where I can say, this is exactly how it's going to play out.

I'm just not that type of person. Because all these great men of God are divided. You know, this person disagrees with this person disagrees, like, when is it going to happen, how is it going to happen? And I'm like, I can't go up there and say, hey, right before the tribulation, we're out of here.

And in my Bible, there's seven different views over church history. There's even a mid-trib view. And then there's after tribulation.

Now, I like the idea of leaving before the tribulation, amen? But, you know, I can't say that, and then I'm gone, I'm dead, my kids are like, hey dad, what's up? You know, we see the Antichrist, he's over there in

Europe, and he's ruling the world, and what did you tell us? You told us we would be out of here, we wouldn't see this. And so I personally can't say that, although they've got great points. I'm going to teach on the different views when I go through this.

But I would just caution you to hold these types of things loosely, where men of God and women of God, smart theologians are divided. And I'm going to talk about the different views. And I would probably lean towards, you know, what we call pre-trib, dispensational, lean towards that, but I've got some issues with some of these things.

And what happens is we try to pull in the 70 weeks of Daniel, many of you have heard of that, but then the last week hasn't come yet, it's coming later, and then we pull in Ezekiel, Magog, and Gog, and then we pull in the building of the temple, and the reinstating of sacrifices, then we pull in the millennial reign of Christ, and the devil's bound in a thousand years, and then we pull in the number and the mark of the beast, and then we pull, it's like, what you have to do is put together a puzzle. There's no verse that says, hey, this is going to happen just like this. So what we have to do is we pull in different things, like, ah, you know, is Daniel saying this, and so I'm going to be going through that, so I would encourage you, like Pastor Abraham says, be in your place, because you don't want to miss it, but this is so important right now, because I think this is a preparation for the church, getting the church ready.

And I was in a meeting, many of you know, in Dallas, Texas, and just got back, what was that, Wednesday or so, and there's a lot going on, and we need to be prepared. Many of you know, you're staying kind of abreast of what's going on, the digital system, that's just inevitable, what they call cryptocurrency, or the digital dollar, and instead of going to PayPal, you'll have to go to the government, and then they release it to PayPal, and Venmo, and different things, it's more that tightening up, not good stuff, I'm not a conspiracy theorist, but that's not good stuff. It's funny how all of us who were saying things a couple years ago, now most of it's coming true, we're all conspiracy theorists.

I remember, we were both saying, hey, this Wuhan lab, you know, and here we go, got chewed out for saying that kind of stuff, and questioning some election integrity, and things like that, it's, you know, we're seeing a lot of it now. Revelation 2, the loveless church, blinded by pride, big head, small heart, to the angel of the church of Ephesus writes, so again, to remind some of you, maybe you weren't here, John is writing this, the disciple John, and this one letter, this portion is going to be written to the angel of the church of Ephesus, meaning the church in the area of Ephesus, up in Asia Minor, I believe, or Asia, it's above Jerusalem, about 600, 700 miles, and I just kind of realized it this morning, and I wrote it down, it appears to me that these are being written to the leaders, the messenger of the church, the angel of the church, actually, angel can be translated messenger, I'm not sure how many of you are aware of that, and so these letters are being written almost like to the pastor of the church, hey, get the people ready, get this right in your own life, and make sure that your church, the lampstand is not removed, meaning the anointing, the power of Christ, the influence you have in your culture, and so, to me, that was just a great reminder of this call to pastors, to really make sure the church is going in the right direction, isn't there so much confusion out there with what direction is right? Well, you've got to have the Word of God, that's the only standard, we can't trust feelings, Lord knows we can't trust feelings, because if I feel like this, then I become this, if I feel like I'm a woman tomorrow, then I'm a woman, right? See, feelings are not, don't worry, I've never even, that's never even, I can't relate to that at all, I've never even, I don't get it, I don't get it, but our feelings is what people say, you can't say that because you hurt their feelings, or everyone's offended, and so, the truth is going to be the only gauge that we can look to in these difficult times. So, these things says, he who holds the seven stars in his right hand, so this is Jesus saying these things, and

who walks in the midst of the golden lampstands, the seven golden lampstands, of course, a number of perfection, and this is a timeless message for all believers, all believers can turn to Revelation 2 and 3, and of course, all of Revelation, but more specifically, these, I remember 23 years ago, reading these, and even then, it began to minister to me, and begin to really speak into my life, and it talks about Jesus is going to be in the midst of these churches, and as I put up there, you can see atmosphere matters, atmosphere matters, I don't want to get too crazy, right, uncharismatic, and I don't want to get too conservative, but there is something about the atmosphere of a church that matters, where Christ is honored, His word is elevated, and there's brokenness, and humility, and unity of the people, that's a place God, Jesus there is in the midst, what exactly does that mean? I don't want to go beyond what the Bible says, because then you kind of speculate, and you can say some wrong things, and I've never seen Jesus walking down the front aisle, but there's something profound and powerful when we honor God, and when the church service honors God, and when God's people are truly there crying out to Him, in unity and faith, and getting rid of petty differences, and removing the root of bitterness, and Jesus, could it be that He's there, and now able to heal, and set free, and strongholds being broken? Because that atmosphere matters.

Think about it, when you have horror movies on at home, versus worship on, is there any difference? Well, your family might be at more peace with the horror movies, because the demons are settled, but when you put on worship, right, all hell breaks loose. It's still the hardest thing I've ever done, is try to have family devotionals. I'm telling you.

That is a chore, that's difficult, but we need obviously to get back to that. So atmosphere matters, I'd say the atmosphere of the church, the atmosphere of your home, we are concerned about the atmosphere here, that's why we look at this as one long service, we don't say, okay, worship team, do what you do, I'll do what I do, prayer team will do what they do, it's one united service, flowing together. And so Jesus said this, I know your works, how many of us can relate to this? Don't raise your hand, but just internalize this.

I know your works. Okay, you labor, you're patient, and you cannot bear those who are evil. So that's pretty good so far, isn't it? They do things at the church, they're active, and how much of the evil out there makes you sick to your stomach? What you see, the school districts are trying to pass, or the government offices, they're so brazen now, your kids are literally not your kids, they belong to the state, so they say.

And then the pornography in the libraries, those kind of things, we can't bear those. In other words, they make us sick, and Jesus says, I share my heart with you, is that we can't bear evil, and we can't look upon it as good. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and you have found them liars.

So, in the church, you have to remember that it's okay to test things. We can become the most gullible group of Christians, not just church, but in general, because we're trusting by nature. I mean, I learned this the hard way.

23 years ago, I would get a plumber. Sorry, Jason, I'm not talking about you. He's a good plumber.

But I don't even know if he has a sign of the fish on his business card. But you get the sign of the fish on their card, and then you're like, this guy's not a Christian. Right? And the guy's on TV.

I wonder, how do they stay on TV? That's a huge budget. By Christians. Not testing the spirits.

It's not wrong and judgmental to say, hey, I know you're saying this, but what does God's Word say? We have to test those. We even test those who come into the church and want to get involved in ministry. We have to test what they say and what they do.

And you have tested them. And they are liars. And you have found them liars.

And so we find here that works and labor must flow from worship rather than replace it. Listen, I'd rather have a worshiper than a worker any day. We need the workers.

Don't get me wrong. But from worship, that worshipful heart, that humble broken heart, then you can better serve. Then you can better minister to others.

So true, biblical work must flow from a heart of worship. And sadly, in the church though, many times we can get people who want to be workers, and they're actually hiding from worship. Did you catch that? They're not involved in the worship very much.

They don't like prayer meetings. They don't like worship mornings. But they'll work.

And that's because often the heart's not right. It's much easier to work than it is to worship. Because working, even our flesh can do that, meaning our old man and our old nature.

And we go to work. And so we can work. We want to do these things.

Hey, I'm helping the poor. I'm helping children to minister. I'm doing this.

But I don't want to worship. And that's not good at all. Because that's where a lot of churches fall apart.

They've got a lot of workers, but not a lot of worshipers. And this group even knew the Word. They know exactly what the Bible says.

They knew the Word. But they were going through the motions, and that's what we're going to find out. And going through the motions is dangerous.

And you'll look at, and I've studied a lot of the churches that are closing. I mean, thank God a lot of them are ungodly. But a lot of them, they've dwindled down.

They're smaller. And they could fit all these things into their doctrinal statement. I mean, they're patient.

They show up each Sunday. They point out error. They become good sin-sniffers.

You guys want me to walk around? Oh, this side's pretty bad. Let's see. But it's like they do everything Jesus said.

I mean, so what's wrong with us then? Well, keep reading. You have persevered, and you have patience. See, they're going through the motions.

You can have sound doctrine and straight as a gun barrel, but you're just as empty. You can have the letter of the law, but not the spirit of humility and brokenness inside your heart. And this is why they wound people with the Word.

This is why they rarely see anybody come to saving faith. They don't share the Gospel much. They're very prideful and arrogant.

And He said, you've labored. For My name's sake, and you've not become weary. This is incredible.

But, nevertheless, Jesus has something against them. Isn't that profound? Like to new believers, they probably read this and they think what in the world? What could they have against them? And always remember that. Movement in spiritual things is not necessarily moving in the Holy Spirit.

Having a knowledge of these things. A lot of people have knowledge of what God's Word says, but their heart is far from Him. The prophet said, Woe to those who draw nigh unto Me with their mouth, but their hearts are far from Me.

And all of us can slip into that mode if we're not careful. But this is amazing, because He's pointing out these people, these Christians. Many of them are Christians, of course.

Some are not. I think a lot fall into this camp who are not truly believers, but they're going through all the motions. And so they look.

Don't they look the same often? And you don't know the fruit until you take the bite. Have you ever seen the plastic apples? You go in and grab one and you're like, oh, jeez. It's a plastic apple.

So a lot of times we don't know someone's true colors until they go through the furnace of affliction. Or until they're challenged. Or until somebody lovingly confronts them.

Or if you live with someone like this, you can see it pretty easily, right? But in church, how hard is it to come in and put on a smile? Hey, brother. Hey, sister. Oh, I love being with God's people.

Oh, you just come and you sing. Oh, that was a great message. Let's go eat.

Hey, they look pretty solid. We see this a lot here over the years. Because you see what they're doing, but you don't see here the heart.

That's why we always, any time we're considering anybody for leadership or any type of servant role usually, is we obviously ask for references. But we also like to talk to your spouse and kids. Is daddy what he says he is? Is mommy really holy and spiritual? No, we don't word it that way.

But you can tell. You can tell. And we've had people say, oh, yeah, no.

Who is on Sunday is not who he is on Monday. Now granted, let me give you a little encouragement. Nobody's perfect.

Sometimes I'm not who I am on Monday, who I am on Sunday either. Because life throws you some curveballs. You get in bad moods.

You get edgy. Things happen, but you're quick to repent. It's the difference.

That's the difference. The fruit of repentance. If you're sorrowful and repentant, there's an internal struggle.

That's a sign of a believer. But somebody who's defensive and full of excuses and always trying to throw it back on you and they're not repentant, you have to wonder, do you truly have the new birth inside of you? Because when you have been born again, there's a new life. You can't just continue in sin.

You're miserable. And I like that prodigal son story because he was miserable eating with the pigs. Like, I'm just going to go home.

Have you ever been there? I'm just going back to the Father. I don't know enough of this playing around in the world. And so you can gauge.

If some of you use the John MacArthur Study Bible, I think at the back of it, it gives all the signs of genuine fruit. And you can see by a love for God, a love for God's Word, sincere humility, genuine repentance. And there are indicators.

There are signs. Now, people can fake that for a little while, but it's hard to fake that long term. Because eventually it will come out.

And so Jesus said, hey, you've done all this, nevertheless. This is so bad, so bad that Jesus said, nevertheless, I have this against you. If you don't repent and change, I'm going to remove your lampstand.

I'm going to remove your influence. I'm going to remove your anointing. You're no longer under my covering.

You're on your own now because you are a stiff-necked, rigid, arrogant church. And I can't move in that. So it's a call to repentance.

I have this against you. You have left your first love. Does anybody not know what that means? It's okay, because it can be a little confusing.

It basically means all of the things He mentioned are good, but they have to flow from the right heart. So when I love Jesus, I want to point out the false prophets. But I don't take excitement in doing it.

It breaks my heart. It truly breaks my heart. I want to be patient and work, but it flows from the right heart, from a gracious heart, from a humble heart.

And again, we're not perfect, so in the midst of all that humility, here comes some pride. We get our feelings hurt. We hear the word no.

But you've left your first love. And it's really a call to the church. He's not saying repent in regard to salvation.

He's actually saying, remember the fire you had? Do you remember when the Word of God came alive and you couldn't get enough? Do you remember when worship just touched your heart and you began weeping? Do you remember that time when the Holy Spirit filled you with His power and presence and just as you're driving and you begin to feel God's presence and power, you have to share with others? You've got to give your life to the Lord. You've got to give it back. You have this love and this zeal for Jesus.

And over time, what happens? Cold, callous. Usually it's because of discouragement. You know, you're on fire for God and you get very discouraged.

I know that happened to me in my younger years. I had the biggest surprise. I've shared this before.

If you've been here a while, I don't mean to tell this story often. I mean, it's not a story, but it's a fact often. But one of the biggest surprises when I came back to the Lord as a prodigal son was the division in the church.

I mean, I literally could not believe it. A lot of them had left their first love. And when you're on fire for God, be careful.

Misery loves company. And I remember once I got outside of my local church bubble, the Holy Spirit doesn't do that anymore. You can't speak in some language.

That's of the devil. Healing? Are you kidding me? What a joke. Look at these guys on TV.

You didn't go to seminary? You can't be a pastor. It's all this discouragement. And if that's not hard enough, what about life discouraging you? You know, you think you're doing great things and boom! You want to do things for God? Boom! You're praying, all hell breaks loose.

Remember the hardest season by far? My wife would tell you, we've never known sickness like we knew sickness when we decided to plant the church. I mean, I didn't even know what foot and mouth disease was. What is this? And you go to the veterinarian? That and our kids, and then it's a massive degree of strep throat.

I'm missing like half a dozen things. Everything is so discouraged. To be honest with you, there was seasons of like, you know what? I'm done with this.

I'm just going to stay with what I'm doing. I don't need to go through this. And you get discouraged.

And then we go out in ministry and we're planting the church, and then not everyone who says they're with you is with you. Man, our lessons learned the hard way. Nobody really, I mean, everyone's gone within the first couple of years.

Some of it's my fault. Of course, you've got to own it. But a lot of it is just like, I didn't know you preached like that.

But I remember one couple, I felt terrible, but they thought they were going to be the worship leader, and they weren't. I'm like, I didn't even know you could sing. How am I supposed to know this stuff? And then just getting hurt.

Anybody been hurt in the church? I think it's Yvette and Ron who's been with us the longest, and of course, Linda. She can't go anywhere. Morgan's mom.

She's stuck. But, Yvette, you've seen this more than anyone over the years. There's something about sticking together.

The unity, the camaraderie, and just the love we have for each other getting through the difficult seasons the families have for each other because you stick with it and you humble yourself. It's just amazing. But just the discouragement can really zap that first love.

And Christian, as you're walking, do you ever fall back into the sin that you thought you dealt with? Not the eleven? The nine o'clock is pretty honest. But you're like, what am I doing? I'm back in this. I thought God was going to take this away.

And then this is happening. My walk with the Lord isn't... And then discouragement comes in and you lose your first love. See, you still know what you learned.

You still can point out the sin in others too. And if you're not careful, if you don't humble yourself and repent, you become very judgmental. Like a modern day Pharisee.

And you're so quick to point out... Pray for people who lash out at you or quote Scripture a lot. Many times, they're upset at their self. They know they're not measuring up.

And instead of humbling themselves, they get hard. Like, yeah, but you... If you ever hear that one a lot, yeah, but you... I gave my wife permission. Let me know if I ever say, yeah, but you, but you, but you all the time.

You know, never look in the mirror. Right? And you become... You lose your first love because that first love, where does it come from? Just kind of like, can you just, you know, make it up and hope it happens? No, you have to humble yourself. And as you humble yourself and break before God, people are sometimes confused about that word broken because in our language, you don't think it's a good thing.

It's a very good thing because my pride is being broken. That's what I mean. Broken by God, it means your pride is being broken.

And God is crushing me. And now because of that, Lord, I humble myself and a broken and contrite heart, I will in no way cast away. I will strengthen those who humble themselves.

And if you wait upon the Lord, you shall renew their strength. Muscle? No. He's talking about spiritual strength.

So that love returns again for God through brokenness and humility and returning. And then you can return to those things you used to do. And many of you can relate, but have you ever went back and did what you used to do now with the right heart? It's life changing.

It's completely like, now I like doing this versus now I have to do this. And that's why it's hard with the church. In all areas of service, we have plenty of volunteers, but the volunteers that really actually show up and do the majority of the work are the small portion.

And usually it's because of discouragement. Because when you have your first love, you can't wait to get to church. You can't wait to open the Word.

You can't wait to put on worship. It's when the devil gets you in that area of discouragement, you're on a detour to your destiny because of this. This is profound.

This is one of the most important topics I think in the church other than salvation is the fire of the Spirit. This is how you will set your family free from demonic strongholds and bondages and with praying for people and praying for your children, praying for your marriage, and seeing God really work in your life. It doesn't mean it's easy.

Now that you're on God's side, there's an enemy against you. I didn't realize this. I thought, oh, it's going to be better now.

God's on my side. Well, now there's somebody against me. At first, nobody was really against me.

Just myself. But then now spiritual warfare happens. And so you can really make a difference when you return to your first love.

So we are praying for people at the first service. We're going to pray for you afterwards if you need prayer to return and just say, I want that fire. I want that conviction.

It's a real easy test. Is God the priority in your life? Is God the priority? Is He that all-consuming fire? Do you want to watch things that honor Him? Not that you do perfectly, again. Do you want to listen to things that honor Him? Do you want to hang around friends that build you up, not pull you down? There's a desire for more of His Word.

Desire to get to church. And that's the fires of revival that can happen in your own heart. But we do see here that confrontation with the right heart and in the right spirit is very biblical.

Jesus is confronting the church. How many of those seven churches do you think got rebuked? Yep, you guys know, you've read Revelation. Five! Five of the seven get rebuked by Jesus.

See, it's okay to get rebuked because a person truly loves you. If a person's never open for constructive criticism and lovingly be challenged, you have to wonder, is there that much pride in their heart? And that's how we grow. That's how things can change.

That's how the men's ministry thing changed this morning. The cook came to me and the guy's like, hey, this isn't going to work later in the day. Can we just start earlier? I'm like, of course.

I mean, that's the easy thing, right? That's not a difficult thing. But being open to listening to others and being open to that positive feedback. Because we have blind spots.

I'm having our staff read a book right now. Five blind spots. Do you know what a blind spot is? Right? You're driving.

You honk, honk. People are honking at you. And you get back over.

It's like, I didn't even see that. And all Christians have a blind spot somewhere that we either choose not to see or we don't see. And it takes the honking of the horn, the Word of God, to get us to wake up.

Funny side story. I'll never rent this car again. I rented an Infiniti SUV in Dallas last week.

It took me like five times of it honking at me for me to realize. Because when you go over to another lane without turning on your signal, the car would honk at me. Honk, Gracie.

She finally figured it out. I'm like, whoa, what is that? Finally, after five times, I realized there's nobody around me. What's going on? And so I YouTubed it or whatever.

I'm like, oh, it honks at me when I don't use my turn signal. But guess what? I use my turn signal from thereafter even if I didn't need a turn signal. Because it can get you when you're over that white line or yellow line, and it can honk at you.

And I did not like that at all. It confronted me. My Infiniti confronted me.

Oh, what a journey. I don't know if I'm renting a car again. I might take Uber.

And then Hertz told me, okay, you're going south of Dallas towards Fort Worth. You'll be okay. Just don't get on toll roads.

All I did was get on toll roads because GPS just took me on all these toll roads. I don't know how to get off. What am I doing? This is very stressful.

My daughter loved traveling, but I'm like, this is very stressful for me. And so you need that confrontation. That confrontation that will wake you up.

Where people say, hey, you're not going in a good direction. And if a person doesn't receive that, I believe that the patience of God does have a watch on it. We're confusing God's patience right now with His approval.

And that's my concern. Spiritual pride is deadly and it is damning. As I said before, workers are not always worshipers.

Without the oil of the Spirit... Isn't that ironic? The oil, often throughout the Old Testament, mainly, and I believe in the New too, laying on of hands, anointing with oil. The oil represented the Holy Spirit. And so without the oil of the Spirit, we can become rigid, mechanical, formal, and cold.

And in a church, there's usually three types of people that we can see easily. You've got the rigid. You guys want to be the rigid type? So this is the type.

Okay, let's change it. You guys want to be the rigid type? Alright. Don't worry, I'm going after this side next.

And we see it all the time. They're rigid. You know, just hard.

Yeah, they might be able to argue you. They know the Word of God. But man, they're so arrogant.

Do you even love anybody? There's no love. They're hard, they're cold, they're rigid. Yet, they know the Word of God.

They know it. They can quote it. They can put you in your place with it.

And that is very challenging and very difficult. And then this side. The compromisers.

Sorry, you chose. And you know this side, maybe loving, whatever brother, I don't care. Just compromise.

I don't take the Word of God too seriously. And we're going to talk about that. Jesus rebukes those churches who allow this and allow that and allow this.

But then you have the middle group who is able to marry both of those. They have the love, the openness, the good heart with the Word of God. They've returned to their first love.

They have the authority of the power and the Word of God. And this is the group that they refer to as spirit-filled, anointed Christians. This is the healthy church.

And this is what we try to get everybody on this page. As we read, we'll see about the churches that compromise. And there's a lot right now, are there not? I mean, you see some of the videos out there.

It's unbelievable what they're doing. It's incredible. It's much easier to be a fault finder than a grace builder.

Much easier to be a fault finder than a grace builder. In a nutshell, this church had meditation, but they had lost their adoration. Do you know what adoration is? Adoring.

They lose that adoration. And that's why some people, I see this all the time on the hard, rigid side, is they love the Word of God. I'm just reading the Word of God.

I'm studying the Word of God. I'm debating the Word of God. But you never find them at the altar.

You never find them broken and humble in seeking the heart of God. You never find them gracious and loving. Why? Because they have the meditation on the Word, but they don't have the adoration for Christ.

And let me tell you right now, as somebody who's went through all different kinds of things, if you have the Word without the brokenness and the humility, you can really hurt a lot of people. As a leader, you can hurt them. The compromising leader hurts them spiritually.

But the arrogant father, leader, whatever that has the Word, but misses the power and the love of the Spirit can damage others relationally and emotionally. I'm getting a lot of people shaking their heads. You know exactly who that person is.

And I've shared before, I've been that person earlier on. Pastor Abrams opened up about it. He's been that.

Man, we've got the Word. We can pound this pulpit. Why don't you guys get your life in shape? Come on! What's wrong with you? Come on! But see, you can say the same thing with tears in your eyes.

Maybe a little calmer. I know a couple weeks ago, I really felt prompted. I mean, I got really bold about praying for our children.

My friend put it on Twitter. It's like 46,000 views of it in two weeks. Just on Twitter.

But there's something that resonated with people. You know, like calling them, guys, we've got to take this seriously. And because when you love people, you can talk more boldly, can't you? When you truly love people, you can talk more boldly.

George Whitefield, I mean, some of his sermons were like, you read his sermons like, whoa! But it was said he would rarely preach a sermon without tears in his eyes. Without weeping for the people because when they know they love you, when they know they love you, they can listen. They had meditation but lost their adoration.

So Jesus, here's the solution. He doesn't leave you hanging. Thank God.

Remember, Jesus said here's the solution. And I believe this is the solution for many of you here this morning or many of you who might be listening later. This is powerful.

Right here, right now, this is the line of demarcation. Have you heard that phrase before? There's a line there that you must, in this case, cross. There's something you must do.

Remember. Remember from where you have fallen. Just because you know all this stuff and do all this stuff and you're a legalistic Pharisee, it doesn't matter.

Remember where you've actually fallen. He used the term fallen. Look up the word in the Greek lexicon.

It's to trip over. It's to come down. It's to abase.

And so, you have fallen away from where you should be, so your works don't save you. Your works don't get the applause of God. It must come from a right heart.

And He said, therefore, repent. Repent and do what you used to do. Wait a minute.

I'm doing what I've always done. No, you used to do it with the right heart. With a heart filled with joy.

A heart filled with love. A heart filled with enthusiasm and ambition. You weren't upset at people all the time and a critical spirit and a spirit of offense and a root of bitterness.

You didn't come with all that. Return to that first love. Because Jesus, He tells you the truth, man.

Or else, I will come to you quickly, quickly, and I will remove that lampstand. I will remove the anointing of the church, the fire of the church. How many churches have you seen that were once good and now they've declined after years? What happened? Many times they've left their first love.

It's such a call. And God doesn't play around. If I know anything, God does not play around.

He said repent. Unless you repent, He says it twice. And so remembering is a gift.

I talked about the power of remembering before. Or the promise of remembering. God says if you remember of this and then you turn, I will give you this promise.

Remembering for the purpose of change reflects humility. But watch out for the evil person who likes to remember things so they can argue and be critical. Oh yeah, I remember.

The heart's still not good. And assess yourself regularly. I try to do this.

Where are you at now versus where you used to be? And in my Bible, it's like one to ten, where do you rate yourself? And I've done it for 23 years now when I get to that chapter. I want to keep in that eight and nines. I want to keep in that fervency, that fire for God.

I think it was actually, remember David Prather at Central Christian? He asked that question. And I wrote it down in the Bible back then when me and my wife were attending. And every year when I get to that, or twice a year, whatever it is, I remember and that's just a reminder of God, I've got to get back to that first love.

I've been reading all these great books on theology, but how is the congregation doing? How's my love for Christ doing? The first works, that was the heart behind the action. I'm reading a book about the Keswick conferences. They were powerful conferences in Europe.

There's a title there, or a section, Don't Block the Blessing. And they said, a deep work of the Spirit is quenched when we harbor sin, but it's renewed when we repent. That can be life-changing for some of you this morning.

I'm assuming many of you didn't come here to play church. Did you just want to get up, come do your thing, check it off, and be done with church? Most people come because, Lord, I need to hear from You. I need to be encouraged.

I need some direction. I need a breakthrough in my life. Anybody tired of dealing with the strongholds? Maybe in your life, in your family's life.

Church, as business as usual, is not going to cut it anymore. And you came here because, Lord, I need to hear from You. So again, a deep work of the Spirit is quenched when we harbor sin, but it's renewed when we repent.

Now, I'm assuming, and I know for a fact, this does not apply to everyone here. Many of you are fighting the good fight of faith. You are persevering.

You are getting back up. You're not perfect, but your heart's on the Lord. But this is a call to those who are harboring sin, besetting sin.

There's a lot of pride. Maybe you're mad at God. Maybe the person reflected God in your life, and you have this against God, or you have this pet sin that's not a big deal.

And if you're harboring that, what they mean there is like a ship coming into the harbor. You let it park there. You will not know the fullness of the Spirit until you deal with that.

And they said many times during the convention, the Holy Spirit has made it clear to an individual that a certain action is not in harmony with the mind of Christ. So as I'm preaching, the Holy Spirit is going, He's convicting, He's showing you what area He wants you to give up. He's showing you if He wants you to come to this altar and recommit your life to the Lord and receive that fire of the Holy Spirit again.

Do not let pride stop you. And when such a revelation is accepted by the hearer, and they repent, it prepares the way for the fullness of the blessing. The fullness of the Spirit.

But be careful, pride blinds us. Pride makes excuses. And pride blame shifts.

It shifts the blame. And pride also lies and pride manipulates. It's hard to be with a very prideful person, is it not? I mean, we all struggle with it already.

It's hard enough if you're struggling with it. Let alone dealing with a very prideful, arrogant heart. And sometimes that heart needs to be lovingly confronted and challenged and not given into.

And then we become an enabler. Did you know that you can enable pride in others by either doing nothing? Or submitting to it and just whatever. I'm not going to say anything.

I don't want to rock the boat. And we actually enable the pride in others. But there's a time sometimes to lovingly confront.

But this person has the illusion of spirituality. They have the form of godliness. So I want to talk real quick and then I'll close.

To the unbeliever. Pride blinds many, if not all, from reading God's road map clearly. Hard hearts are on the broad road of destruction, but they think they're on the narrow path.

See, they know. Even demons know. This is what amazes me.

In other countries, this is not true necessarily because they've never heard of Jesus. But in America, most people, most people, unbelievers, you go to them and ask, oh yeah, I know Jesus died on the cross for our sins. They'll tell you that.

I'm like, you're not far from the kingdom. But see, they know it. But what do they think? They're on the broad road to destruction, but they think they're on the narrow path because they are basically a good person.

That's the biggest reason. Have you ever watched Ray Comfort's videos? Those guys cracks me up. I'm a good person.

According to whose standard? You think you're a better person? I know I'm not a good person. There's nothing good that dwelleth in me, says Paul. It's the Spirit of God in us that makes us right before God and makes us able to do good things.

That's why God says even your good works are but a filthy rag in My sight, because what you're doing out of the flesh cannot result in anything good. But the unbeliever is blinded. They think they are a good person.

Now, they might do good things from time to time, but if you were to reveal the motives of those things, are they really, really that good? And good is never good enough. Or you might be a believer. And let me encourage you.

I've been here many times. Pride quenches and grieves the Spirit. Pride quenches and grieves the Spirit.

You can be straight as a gun barrel theologically, but you're just as empty. Taking pride in our doctrine or pride in our work or what we do or what we've accomplished. They are full of self, but they are empty of the fruit of the Spirit.

Here's to know. Guys, if you want to take the test, it's very simple. The fruit of the Spirit is love.

Let's just stop there for a minute. A prideful, arrogant person is not very loving. And that's what I pray.

Sometimes it's hard. You know, I had to apologize for something the other day. But I want them to at least see love in my heart and my family and meekness, humility to the much as I can.

Right? There's a desire for that, but they have no love. They're not a loving person. Well, you have to ask yourself, that's the fruit of the Spirit.

It's the first thing He mentions. If you don't have that, man... Oh, but you can quote Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. You have well-defined eschatology, but you have no love.

No love. Joy? Joy? Would you say that's a great need in the church today? It's like sometimes I want to just go throughout the aisles and say, guys, wake up. Where's your joy? Joy.

But I carry late because I'm not always joyful. When I get here, it takes a little while to get that worship going and get joyful, filled with joy because the enemy's trying to stop us. But pride prevents love and joy.

Are you joyful at home? Or how many of us are Debbie Downers? Here comes Biden after my money again. Man, look what's happening. I hate California.

This is going on. That's going on. Now, some of those things are legitimate, right? But they shouldn't rob us of joy.

And they can't easily, right? I can go from shifting really quick. I mean, just this morning, I don't even know why I looked at Fox News. Eight people dead at the mall in Texas? And that's the one we were going to go visit on Monday or Tuesday right up north of where we were.

My joy just tanked. And then you get to church, all hell's breaking loose. I go, this is going, this is breaking, this isn't working.

It's like joy robbers. That's a good sermon title in the future. Joy robbers.

But no, isn't that true? This is how you can tell if you need what I'm saying this morning. Are you a person of love and joy and peace and contentment and gentleness? Some of the men I know I've met over the last 23 years, some of the most intellectually smart, theologically smart men that know a lot of the Bible are not very gentle, not very kind, not very gracious. Why? Because you're missing the fruit of the Spirit.

The humility of the Spirit. The brokenness of the Spirit. Returning to the first love.

That changes everything. That changes everything. Look from where you have fallen, Jesus said, and get back up and return.

Fall forward back into My arms of forgiveness and grace and love. And let Me restore you. So is there no indication of love, joy, peace, contentment, long-suffering, gentleness, kindness, self-control? That's the fruit.

And if we're missing the fruit, you fill in the blank. It's a call to repent and return. Don't let pride keep you where you're at the rest of your life.

This breaks my heart. I've seen people for years, years, stay in a spiritually dead and dry condition because of pride. And as soon as you point it out, you're the bad guy.

Man, I'm the bad guy on a list of a lot of people. But we can't see that blind spot. And then Revelation 2.6.7, I'll close here.

But this you have, He built them back up. The sandwich approach I put up there. It's when you build someone up, and then you give them the bad news, the hard news, and then you build them back up.

It's very good. Learn that lesson if you're in business or dealing with people. You never want to just go in and slam.

At least not all the time, right? Sometimes that just happens if you're reprimanding somebody, especially children. But there should be a building up, and then bring in the hard truth, and then you build them back up. And he said, You hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans.

And I have no clue exactly what that group of people were, and neither do theologians. This person says Nicolaitans. If you break down the word, it could mean against the laity.

Like Roman Catholicism, against the laity. Or it could be this false prophet who led people astray. Or it could be a dozen other things.

But it's something that was evil and they hated it, and Jesus said, I hate it too. And that you have going for you. He who has an ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

Is he talking about a physical ear? No. One thing that I've found, God will not force somebody. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

Open your ears. Open the eyes of your understanding. And to him who overcomes, I will give to you to eat from the tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

And we will talk about that as we get through Revelation. But there's something about overcoming. They overcame Him by the blood of the Lamb, the word of the testimony, and they persevered to the end.

We'll read about that in the next chapter. There's an overcoming. There's a perseverance.

Your perseverance will be rewarded. Holding on strong, even when you don't feel like it. God will reward that.

And so, final recommendation. The responsibility to respond rests upon the hearer. When you hear God's Word, my job is over.

I get to go home. But your responsibility is to listen to what the Word of God says and what the Holy Spirit is prompting you to do. And I would say one of the biggest discouragements when a person preaches or pastors is they know, although many will respond, many won't.

And they'll actually go here. They'll leave here. This is possible.

They'll leave here more prideful than when they came in. Wait a minute. Wait a minute.

How is that possible? Because if they harden their heart right now, I don't like what that guy said. I don't know why I came today. Remember, the Puritans were famous for saying the same sun that melts the wax hardens the clay.

And so when people leave here more entrenched in their pride, it's hard to break out of that. And I've seen it. People do leave in a harder spot than when they got here.

Because what do they do? They harden up. The guard comes up. You ever put the guard up? The walls you build to protect you end up imprisoning you? Well, that's a whole new sermon out of Joshua.

But there's a hardness that sets in. Or, a softness can begin. The worship is opening the heart.

The repentance is I'm almost there. I'm receptive and I'm listening. I believe that's why the Bible talks about the seed falling on different soils.

Ah, I'm receptive, but the enemy comes and takes it quickly. Or the seed grows and the cares of the world choke or trials and tribulation drowned out, but there's that seed that falls on good ground. Those who hear the Word and apply it.

Those who are blessed of God. And so you can receive that filling of the Holy Spirit. That joy.

Do you want the joy of the Lord to come back? Then repent and return to your first love. Or maybe if you've never experienced it, you can experience it this morning. Humble yourself before God.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/udmy7M04nEY.mp4>
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