

The Living Dead (Revelation 1:12-2:7)

by Shane Idleman

The sermon emphasizes the importance of returning to one's first love for God to avoid spiritual death and maintain the church's influence.

Duration: 46:43

Scripture: Revelation 2:4

Topics: "Spiritual Vitality", "Returning to First Love"

Description

Shane Idleman addresses the spiritual condition of the church in his sermon 'The Living Dead,' emphasizing that many believers are spiritually dead despite their outward appearances of faithfulness. He warns against the dangers of losing one's first love for Christ, which leads to a lifeless faith characterized by rigid adherence to doctrine without love. Idleman highlights the importance of humility, repentance, and genuine worship, urging the congregation to return to a heartfelt relationship with God. He stresses that true works must flow from love, and without it, the church risks losing its influence and becoming ineffective. The message serves as a call to self-examination and a reminder that spiritual vitality comes from a deep connection with Christ.

Transcript

The book of Revelation. Chapter 1, verse 12. The title of the message, I was going back and forth all week, and I was going to change it, but I think I'll keep it.

The title is The Living Dead. I was thinking about The Frozen Chosen. I had some ideas out there, but I'm going to stick with this one.

In The Living Dead, we are in a series on the seven, a survey of the seven churches. And what I mean by that is dead. When the Bible talks about dead, you can be dead spiritually speaking.

Most of the world, most of our nation is dead. They are the living dead. They are going through their daily routines, but they are dead to the things of God.

They are perishing spiritually and eternally. And that's what the church goes out and do. We try to rescue those who are dying spiritually, or who are actually already dead.

They just don't know it yet. But there's something else that's interesting in the Bible. It often talks about those who have quenched the Spirit of God, those who have grieved the Spirit of God, those who have left

their first love.

And it's ironic, I didn't tell Blessing about what the message was, but returning to our first love, and that's the chapter we're in. There's something that can happen to Christians. It happens quite frequently.

They can die spiritually. They are dying spiritually. They are no longer in tune to the things of God.

The things of God now have maybe been the past and not the future. They have drifted from God, so they are dying spiritually. They've come to a place where that water no longer quenches their thirst, that worship is no longer important.

They're going away from God, so they are dying spiritually. And I want to get to that part of the sermon in Revelation 2, but I want to pick up where we left off last week. Revelation 1.12, this is John.

Christ is speaking to him. John said, Then I turned to see the voice that spoke to me, and having turned I saw seven golden lampstands. And I'll let you know up front that the context is in verse 20.

Seven golden lampstands are seven churches. And in the midst of the seven lampstands, the seven churches, one like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to his feet, and girded about his chest with a golden band. And his head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like a flame of fire.

His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace. And his voice is the sound of many waters. He had in his right hand seven stars, which are seven messengers.

Out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and his countenance was like the sun shining in its strength. That's how you describe God. I mean, how would you describe God? What a person has to do is they have to pull in the most dramatic imagery the human language has to try to describe God.

That's what he's doing. I mean, how else would you describe him? You'd have to pull in everything that we know, the snow so white, the fine brass. And he even said refined as with fire, so that true brass comes out.

Many waters. Have you ever stood, say, at Niagara Falls, and you hear this thunderous roar? They're trying to describe God. And he also mentioned lamps.

And it's a good time to remind all of us that lamps light the way. So in case you're wondering what a church is supposed to do, what the pulpit is supposed to do, we actually light the way. Your word is a lamp unto my feet, a light unto my path, or a lamp unto my path, a light unto my feet.

However you want to frame it, the truth is still there, that the church, the Christians, we are to help point people to the way. And that's why the church sometimes loses that light, loses that influence, because they're no longer pointing people to the way, the way, the truth, the life. They are just about keeping together and keeping that social club together and going through the motions.

A sword goes out of his mouth. Well, that's pretty easy to figure out. The word of God pierces like a double-edged sword, doesn't it? It hurts before it helps.

This is what you always have to remember. The message of the gospel hurts before it helps. It condemns a person before it releases them.

But we often want the opposite. I want to be released, I don't want to be condemned. I want to be set free, I don't want to hear the hard things.

But Jesus, to five of the seven churches, he has some very hard words. Why? To hurt first, and then ultimately to help. That's what sometimes preaching does.

And it's funny for me to watch even different pastors around the Antelope Valley. I won't mention names and things, of course. But some of them are so worried about not offending and not hurting and not upsetting.

And there's a guy who was on The View in New York recently and didn't mention that abortion was a sin. Kind of just skated around that whole thing because we don't want to offend. It's just only about the good things and the positive things.

Oh, I don't want to hurt. It's meant to hurt. It's meant like a double-edged sword to go and pierce the heart.

And if we look forward in Revelation, John says again, I saw him coming from heaven with the armies of heaven. And out of his mouth goes a sword that he should strike the nations. He will rule the nations with the rod of iron.

Jesus will tread the winepress and the fierceness and the wrath of Almighty God. So we see that same imagery, a sword coming out. It's almost like when you get fired up preaching, that's what's coming out.

A double-edged sword. It's piercing, it's dividing, it's conquering, it's overcoming. That's what Jesus is doing here.

He's speaking to the churches. Now here's a special note I want to remind everyone of. I believe that all of us can fall into these five of the seven conditions that we're going to talk about in the weeks to come.

Two churches get praise reports, but five churches don't. And it's interesting as a pastor when I'm preparing this, you do wonder if Jesus walked in. Would you like to take a tour of Westside for the week and see what we do? Could you just imagine that? I mean, everybody stands up if a president walks in, but can you imagine if Jesus walked in, sat down.

I mean, I don't think I could preach. I'd be like, this is worship, right? Because every word could be in my mind, is this pleasing? So that's what he's doing. He's writing to the seven churches.

Actually, we talked about last week up in Asia Minor. I believe it represents seven completeness and where we can go. We can remain faithful to the word of God or we can drift in these areas.

So be very careful because we can, all of us can drift in this area. Verse 17, And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. But he laid his right hand on me, saying, Do not be afraid.

I am the first and the last. I am he who lives and was dead. And behold, I am alive forevermore.

Amen. I have the keys of Hades and of death. Write the things which you have seen and the things which are and the things which will take place after this.

Important, what are keys? Can you lock your house or you can unlock your house, right? It's also a position of authority. Those who have keys to this church are usually in positions of authority. So he's got

the keys to the kingdom.

He can unlock and he can lock. All authority rests in who he is. Now, I have the keys of Hades and of death.

This could take a whole sermon, but I won't go there. Hades in the New Testament is what Sheol is. Sheol in the Old Testament, where it's a place where the dead would be temporarily.

It didn't talk often of eternal consequences. It was a place of temporary. The body would decay.

It was a place of temporary consignment of death. And then we have the word Gehenna. And it refers to a valley outside of Jerusalem where the kings of Judah would often sacrifice children.

And they would bring decaying bodies, decaying animals, trash, where the fire does not go out. Gehenna, that's a place of eternal torment in the Bible. Or in the city of Jerusalem, that fire would not go out.

And Jesus would use that in different places. So the point really is, at least to me, is death does not have the final say. He said, I have the keys of Hades and of death.

I've overcome the grave and hell, and I am on the throne. I am an authority. There's not two ruling parties here.

I am the ruling party. When you have the keys of death, when you conquer death, when death has no sting, oh, death, where is your sting? Where is that sting, people? Oh, death, the finality, what's going to happen? Christ overcame all of that. He's reinforcing the fact that He has overcome hell, death, and the grave.

And we look to this person with the ultimate authority. So now under the sermon, the living dead, the living dead. And I've done something I don't often do, but I've asked a few people this week to really pray for me, pray for this service, because what I'm about to talk about really impacted my heart this week.

Here's what I'm worried about. This next reading of Scripture is more about website than any other portion we will read. We don't have a lot of lukewarm people here because they run for cover.

They're like, I've had enough of that Shane Idleman guy. I'm not coming back. I'm out of here.

But it's the church that loves the truth but has left their first love that applies to us. Can apply to me. And it was hard.

A lot of people came to my mind preparing this sermon. Where I was in 2005, 2006, I was on this path. I could put down everybody.

Pull down churches, pull down ministries, these guys you see on TV. And God really had to do a work in my heart of becoming critical because I had six, seven years of knowledge. And what do we do? Knowledge puffs up.

And God will begin His humbling work. So this portion of Scripture is going to hit home to a lot of people and it needs to. A.W. Tozer said, a Christian will make spiritual progress exactly in proportion to his ability to criticize himself.

That's worth rereading. A Christian will make spiritual progress exactly in proportion to his ability to criticize himself. See as I criticize myself in light of God's word I change and mature.

I'm growing, you're growing, and I'm being criticized by God's word. I'm being challenged by God's word. I change and I grow and I mature.

But what happens if a person is never open to constructive criticism? Do they get mature? No, they stay very immature. They don't grow at all because they always think they're right. They don't need to ask for forgiveness.

They don't humble themselves. So they never grow in Christ. This type of church that we're going to talk about, this type of person.

Again, I've been there, done that. I can go down this road real quick. You take love from my heart and that's what I'll be.

I'll be able to tell you off with the word of God. I'll be able to slap you with the Bible. I won't be open for criticism, constructive feedback.

And I will become part of the living dead. This type of person, this type of church often has the courage to speak God's truth but not the humility that allows God's truth to speak to them. This stuff is all tweetable and Facebook, right? I mean, God just downloaded this week.

I couldn't stop writing things down. Isn't this so true? We have the courage. This type of church, we're going to talk about this type.

You have the courage to speak God's truth but not the humility to allow God's truth to speak to you. And this person is easy to spot. As soon as you start challenging them, the pride comes up.

They don't want to be challenged. They've got this mastered. They know more than you.

And they've left their first love. Revelation 2-1, here we go. The angel of the church of Ephesus writes, just try this.

The angel of the church of Westside Christian Fellowship writes, These things I say, who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands. I know your works. I know your labor.

I know your patience. And that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not and have found them liars.

And you have persevered and have patience and have labored for my namesake and have not become weary. If that's not the model church, I don't know what is. I mean, isn't that the goal we're shooting for? If Jesus said that about you, wouldn't you say amen? Amen.

Look how solid I am. Look at all these things. But then we stumble upon the next word.

In verse 4, Nevertheless, I have this against you, that you have left your first love. Remember, therefore, from where you have fallen, repent and do the first works. Or else I will come quickly and remove your lampstand from its place unless you repent.

I was going to save this to the end, but I'll say it now. It's interesting, this person, this person, loves to talk about the word repentance, but they themselves do not want to repent. They don't want to repent.

They're telling everybody else to repent. But when it comes to... Jesus is saying, Shane, you repent. You repent.

You return. And it's interesting. Return to the first works.

Well, these are all good works. What are the first works? See, the works must flow from a right heart. So he's not saying go do some different works.

He's saying return to the first works when your works were governed by a pure and humble heart. It's always an issue of the heart. Because a person can have works and be on their way to hell.

A person can have works and be on their way to heaven. What's the difference? The heart. So Jesus...this is going to be a quiet service, I'll tell you.

You can hear a pin drop a few times. Because we're going to... I almost want to skip to the next church. I know your works nevertheless.

Works do not trump love. Outward works must flow from inward love. Workers labor and are patient.

They hate evil. But without love, we become rigid and controlling. We snap at people.

And we don't like to be challenged. Workers without love are often grumpy and easily irritated. Why? Because they don't have the love and the gentleness.

There's a sense of entitlement. Kind of come pushing their way through. It's a sense of entitlement.

Workers become bitter and arrogant because they are workers and others aren't. They've been around a while and they want the control. They view themselves as more spiritual and in tune with God.

And they know more. Jesus is saying... It appears... Pastor, preacher, teacher. I hear your truth, but it's lacking spiritual life.

Mom, dad, ministry leader, usher team, worship team, children's ministry team. I see your works. But... Where's the love? And the grace? And the humility and the gentleness in your voice? Where's the love? Because if we have works without love, we have nothing.

Jesus said, the world will know that you are my disciples. By how well you know the Greek. By how well you broke down the Torah.

And converted it to Hebrew in certain areas and explained the Hebrew. He'll know your works by how well you quote Scripture. He'll know your works by how gifted you are in a certain area.

None of that qualifies. The world will know that we are His disciples by our love for one another. And if you don't think this applies, you should just listen to conversations sometimes.

Do we build each other up? Or do we pull each other down? Do we encourage or we discourage? Do we fight over little things? I mean, I've seen people getting arguments over Bible translations. Really? We're going to war against the devil and you're going to argue over the received text or the textus receptus or the

Vaticanus. Really? Have we lost our first love? Jesus often hurts before he helps.

He said, I have this against you. Here's the problem. Let's just be honest.

Blind spots are hard to see, aren't they? That's why they're called blind spots. When work flows from love, we go from depressed to joy filled. We go from empty to purpose filled.

We go from joyless to joyful. Bitter to loving. Tired to renewed.

Angry to gentle. And boastful to broken. When work flows from love.

This is also interesting. A fresh move of God. Do you know what a fresh move of God is? When he's doing something.

Can I use the word different? When he's changing things. A fresh move of God. It's not the status.

See, I don't know if church is supposed to be that cookie cutter. And I joke about it sometimes, but it's true. One song.

Announcements. Three songs. Hurry up.

Shane, 25 minutes. Another song. We'll be out in time for this.

And it's just this approach to church where we just come in and we get through something. And not allowing the Holy Spirit. Is it maybe okay to worship for a while? Is it maybe okay to just take a different route? So what I mean by a fresh move of God.

This can make workers uncomfortable because their control is threatened. They don't have intimacy with God. So they don't want intimacy at church.

If a person doesn't have intimacy at home with God. They're not going to want intimacy at church. Church becomes very mechanical.

They become hard and abrasive versus humble and gracious. They typically are not worshipers. Workers who have left their first love are typically not worshipers.

They work, but it's hard to worship. Isn't that interesting? It's easy to work for a person who's left their first love. Work, work, work.

But when it comes to worshipping. See that's where the heart's challenged. Because you can't worship God.

Truly worship God. And hold on to that hard callous heart. Because out of worship flows the humility.

And the brokenness and the gentleness. Out of worship. Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth is going to speak.

And out of what God pours in through worship. We are going to live. That's why I said earlier.

This is many in this church. This is many in this church. And it's hard because I take some responsibility for that.

Don't make me go around and do this and point you out. Right? Balcony I can reach you too. I think.

I can. I mean I want to bring a little bit of humor. But this really hit home this week.

Because this is what we're dealing with. And I don't know about you. But I don't want to go.

Oh yeah that's true. And then nothing changes. The same hardness.

The same arrogance. The same pride. Nothing changes.

So that's why I pray God you've got to do something this morning. You've got to break hard and calloused hearts. Another point here.

Jesus is not messing around. Quickly. Quickly he says.

He doesn't give a lot of options. You know you might want to return. Repent.

And remember your first love. He says quickly. You need to do it soon.

You need to do it soon. This is why many churches die. He removes the lampstand of influence.

Because they are unwilling to humble themselves and return. So Jesus says I'm giving you a chance. I'm bringing prayer warriors into the church.

I'm bringing people to speak into your lives. If you don't return quickly. I'm going to remove the lampstand.

I'm going to remove the influence that you have. I'm going to remove the anointing and the power of the Holy Spirit. I don't know if you've ever been in a church where that's gone.

But you could take a nap on the pew. It's dead orthodox. It's truth with no life.

And God says if you don't change. I'm going to have to remove that influence. I'm going to have to remove that anointing of the Holy Spirit.

Like Samson. When God's Spirit left him. The Bible says he knew not that the Spirit of the Lord had departed.

He went through the motions again and was defeated by the Philistine army. And also I believe this is a call to leaders. I will remove you pastor.

I'll remove you leader if you don't. Because it's primarily a letter to the messengers of the church. To the leaders of the church and also the church as a whole.

So you see this happening. Leaders begin to lose their influence. I could give you a whole list of names right now.

But once a decade ago when the truth started. You started to kind of have to see what side you're on. And when you started to have pastors embrace the LGBT agenda.

Embrace gay marriage. You saw the churches just shrink. To nothing.

Their influence is gone. Or you see people get caught in moral failure. Their influence is gone.

Same thing. So this can apply to a person and to a church. What happens is the fire fades.

There's very few baptisms. There's hardly any conversions taking place. They are the living dead.

Individually they are not loving people. They are not witnessing. They're just going through the motions.

Because here's what's happened. I've noticed in my own life for sure. Once you get really theological and you know a lot.

And you start to drift from God. And you lose that humility and grace and thankfulness. Do you want to go out and witness? And go to the hospital homes? And you're on fire for God? Not really.

You just want to keep digging in the Bible. Digging in the Bible to increase this. And you actually forget about evangelism.

You forget about it because it becomes self-centered. We become focused on ourselves and growing. I mean this is a pretty strong rebuke.

Look at all these things. I see all your works. In other words he's saying I see your Christian character.

I mean you fit. You fit the Christian model. You're doing everything I've told you to do.

But it's coming from the wrong heart. And you better return back to your first love. This type of people they are often apologists.

Or they're interested in doctrine. They're interested in truth. They have a zeal for truth.

Because the Bible says here they have tested those who say they are apostles and are not. So basically what they would do is go okay. You know what you're saying you're an apostle.

You're saying you're a Christian. But you're not. According to this you're not.

They knew the Bible. You're Bereans. Right? Well versed in the Scriptures.

They could point out error. They could point out flaws. They could point out the false people.

They could point out the wolves in the midst of the sheep. So they often have a heart for doctrine. They love the Bible.

They almost love this more than the Son of God. That's why I said the Father, the Son, the Holy Word. Not the Holy Spirit.

Because they miss that element. They know the Bible. They're pointing out those who are coming against the church.

See those who don't know this, Jesus is going to talk about them later. They are called lukewarm. I'll spew you out of my mouth.

You don't know anything about God's Word. You're just carnal in nature. But this group, this group knows the Bible.

They might even know the Bible better than me. Oh my. And we get this concept of knowledge and it puffs up.

So be careful. They are very opinionated but not very loving. Anyone convicted yet? A hard heart precedes a deaf ear.

See, workers love to work. They're working. They're busy.

But when it comes to worship, when it comes to humility and brokenness, they run for cover. And a hard heart in this area precedes a deaf ear. They can't hear really well the things of God.

The worship is stifled. Prayer is stifled. You will not see a worker who's lost their first love worshipping and praying.

Oh, they might say a quick little prayer. But they won't come to worship. You know it's morning worship services? Morning prayer.

See, they're there. The living dead. They're there physically but not spiritually.

Worship is stifled. They sing, On a hill far away stood an old rugged cross. But in their heart they're saying, I'm so mad that Dodger's lost.

The emblem of suffering and shame. That was a terrible game. But see, that's what's going on in the heart of a person.

They're just going through the motions. The living dead. They're thinking about later today.

They're thinking about how maybe that song wasn't quite theologically correct. It's too emotional. We need more of the Word.

More of this. And that's all good. I look at the lyrics.

I'm with you. But it's got to come from a right heart. It has to come from the right heart.

I don't know if you're ready for this, but I'm going to just let you have it. Are you ready for the Ephesus test? Are you rigid, unyielding, and like to be right? Do you weep over the sins of others or enjoy pointing them out? Are you more concerned about being right or being loving? Does being challenged about your attitude bother you? Are you often defensive and critical? Has gentleness vanished? Is grace hard to come by? Are you judging the church and others? That will flesh out the hard heart. And I do want to ask a question.

I don't know how many of you were here last Sunday. If not, I'll maybe explain a little bit. But for the person, the worker who's left their first love, and this is another good test.

Did last Sunday's service bother you? Second service, people are up at the altar. It's extended service. Does that type of service bother you? Because it bothered me when I left my first love.

It bothered me. Does coming to the altar and being broken before the Lord and humbling yourself bother you? Does emotional worship bother you? Those who have left their first love or who are in the process of it will avoid this type of service. You will rarely see a worker or the person that this is talking about who has left their first love, and they're just a worker, they're rigid.

You will rarely see them at the altar unless they are repenting of that prideful, arrogant heart. Then you will. But if not, why? Well, why, Shane? Well, I'm glad you asked.

Here's why. They make excuses in their mind. That's for spiritually immature people.

That's for weaklings and wimps. That's for charismatics and crazies. Oh, sir, you are gravely mistaken.

Have you ever killed a thousand men in battle? Are you as bold as Samuel, as courageous as Elisha, and as passionate as Jeremiah? They were all worshipers. So be careful. Be careful.

It might be a hard heart that's preventing you from genuine worship. We received a testimony last week on the email about Sunday service. She wrote this, Sunday at church is how I picture heaven.

I didn't want to leave at the ending of the second service. I went back to the altar one last time to beg God to heal my husband of his addictions. As I got up, my granddaughter was motioning me to go to the altar.

I walked her up there, knelt together. It was an experience I will never forget. I had my arm around her as we bowed our heads together.

And I had the overwhelming feeling to just sit there and be quiet. The words that poured out of my granddaughter's mouth will never be forgotten. See, that's what God does.

And here's what's frustrating for me. I know the people who won't come to this altar. It's the same people month in and month out.

Same people. And I prayed, Lord, this week I'm getting frustrated. I don't want to take it out on them.

I can't force it. The louder I get, it's not going to make more people humble themselves. And it's really not about the altar.

It's just about humbling themselves and being broken before God. It's been a hard week in this area because I know who they are. I can tell you exactly who you are in this service and in the second service.

God brought your name and your face to my mind all week, praying for a large segment of this church. So when you're a pastor of a church and you see that many people fit this definition, it's heart-wrenching. But all of a sudden, I can't do anything.

There's nothing I can do other than preach from a broken heart in this area, trying to say, men, women, you've got to look at your heart. Have you left your first love? Does this apply? Does this apply? But then, thank God, Jesus builds us back up. Boy, he drops the hammer, and then he builds us back up.

And I thought of this, too. The worker, the person who's left their first love, do they build people back up? Often they don't. Often it's a crushing blow of knowledge and arrogance, and they just beat people up.

But Jesus didn't do that. He builds us back up. Listen to this.

But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which also I hate. And you're probably going, who is the Nicolaitans? Well, welcome to all commentaries on the planet, different views out there. Obviously, this person was either a false teacher, or they promoted eating meat sacrifice to idols, or one I'm kind of partial to.

If you look at the word Nico in the Greek and Laotians, laity, it comes from against the laity. So this is maybe the first sign we see in the church of people putting themselves in positions of hierarchy and being against the laity, these positions of, you can think of some denominations now. I won't list any, but the nice big clothing and the hats, and they're above the laity.

And they disregard the common people. So whatever this group was, they were against them, and so was Jesus. And then he says, Guys, this is so important.

Who has a spirit to hear? Let him hear what God is saying to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God. He's not writing to somebody who's not saved necessarily.

Whoever, he who overcomes, overcomes what? My pride and my arrogance and my heart. He who overcomes that pride and that arrogance, that hard heart that's left their first love. They can't worship anymore.

They have no compassion for people. They're so arrogant. God says, please overcome that before it overcomes you.

You have to overcome your pride before that pride overcomes you. So we see this with the Nicolaitans. Workers are defenders of the truth.

The people who have left their first love are defenders of the truth. Defending the truth must come from a loving heart so it pierces and encourages. Some of those who are so adamant about truth are also the most offensive.

Are you guys catching this? Because those who are so adamant about the truth are often the most offensive. You can't even have a conversation with them. Because they're at your throat.

They're so prideful and arrogant and that pride has to be crushed. You have to return to your first love. Because of what happened to me in 2005, 2006, I won't go into a lot of detail, but I was very critical.

The way I could tear down everyone from Joyce Meyer to Rick Warren. Because I would read websites and not really what the person believes, right? Being swayed and critical. My mom said, Shane, your family doesn't even want to be around you.

I had knowledge. I could quote the prophets. Boy, I could preach too.

Loudly. Boldly. And ask people.

You ask Yvette and Ron. Ask Mike Livingston. Ask people who've heard me over the years.

Something has changed in you. It's become more loving. The love of Christ is coming out.

Man, I listen to CDs now from 12 years ago. I'm like, oh boy, oh boy. Man, did I pull out the sledgehammer.

But when my mom said that and my wife confirmed it. If you ever want to know if I'm talking to you, just ask your spouse. Or your children.

But that happened in my own life. I was so adamant, but I was the most offensive. Now it's funny.

I have strong views in a lot of areas. But now people want to get in discussions. I'll just kind of smile.

I just won't get too upset. I mean, that's not the heart of Christ. And that's why I do that.

Because I don't want to get back into that prideful dialogue. Because we can slip it back into this area. Why would you spend a whole chapter and pull out a whole church in this area if it's not important? I mean, these people were the epitome of the church.

You couldn't pick a better example of what a church should look like. Works. Doing things.

Keeping it all together. You love the truth. You're pointing out the false teachers.

Man, you've got it all together, except your heart's not right. So they must overcome their pride, or their pride will overcome them. And when he spoke here of the tree of life, that's about communion with God.

Many times this person has lost their communion with God, but they don't even know it. Because they'll read the Bible, they'll pray, and they'll think they're still grafted into that. I'm not talking about salvation.

I'm talking about communion with God. They don't even know that they've lost that communion with God, because they're going through the motions. But it can be restored.

Overcome means to prevail, to subdue your pride. They must overcome. Jesus says, whoever overcomes.

So that's my call to you this morning. Many of you have to overcome this area. Don't say, oh, Shane, he's younger than me.

I know more about the Bible than he does. See how these excuses work? Oh, that's just some young pastor trying to get us worked up. I'm talking to young people, too.

I mean, this can start around age 30, all the way up, where this hard heart comes in. You must overcome your pride. If you could hear me this week, that has been my prayer, that we see our need in this area.

I mean, just look at everything I just said. Does all of that over the last 25 minutes, does it tee you off? Does that upset you, everything I just said about workers? Does that make you mad that you might be the person God's dealing with? It doesn't make me mad anymore. Like, praise God, that's exactly what happens.

We need to get back to the altar. We need to get back to worship. So I'll close with a few thoughts.

One word this type of Christian does not like to hear is repent. They've been telling everyone else to repent. Quickly, quickly, Jesus says quickly.

Why? They are hurting, not helping. Here's my concern with this type of person. They do more to hurt the cause of Christ than help the cause of Christ.

Because they're going around in the church and they're hurting. They're hurting people. They're not helping.

They go into their community. Do they represent Christ well? Hurting, hurting, hurting. I mean, when I was on Fox News recently, you saw it.

I mean, what was inside could have come out. I could have really hurt that guy. You know, it's like, okay, that's the flesh.

That's not the spirit. Right? But so many people are watching it. Atheists, agnostic, doubters, people in the middle.

They've got to see, you've got to hold the truth and speak from the love of Christ. The work of the Holy Spirit. That's why I think God waited so many years to do things like this.

Because I was not ready. And I'm still a work in progress. Please don't misunderstand.

I often say, I'm a prideful man. Because people say, Shane, you're prideful. Yeah, it's in there.

I'm a prideful man working on humility on a daily basis. C.J. Mahaney said that a lot of years ago. And it's still true today.

We're a work in progress. But quickly, quickly turn. Because you're hurting people, not helping.

You're dividing rather than uniting. And I thought of that this week. If we look at our own lives, are we often, are we known for dividing? Or are we known for uniting? Because that's a sure sign.

But in our pride, we excuse our dividing. I'm just standing for the truth, brother. I'm just preaching theology and they don't want to hear it.

No, you're dividing everybody you come in contact with. You're hurting. You're not helping.

That's a hard heart. So after we surveyed this church, are you dead spiritually? Are you dead spiritually? Do you lack salvation? I don't know if there's anybody in this service, but you've been listening to a family meeting in the last 40 minutes. You've been listening to a family meeting.

But it has overreaching and overarching application. Are you dead to the things of God? Are you just here because that's what good people do? Are you just here because your parents brought you? Or your friend? Or are you dying? Actually, you would be dead spiritually. You'd be already dead spiritually and you need that spiritual life.

The Bible's crystal clear. If you believe in Jesus, if you repent of your sin, you confess Him as Lord and Savior, you will be saved. And as I was preparing this part, just thinking about it, I wonder how many people are turned off by the Gospel when they run into the hard-hearted worker who's left their first love instead of the Christ they hear about.

I told you, this is going to burn some bridges. It's going to hurt a little bit. And I did pray, Lord, can I skip to the next church and just come back to this one at a later date when it's a holiday and everybody's gone? Are you dying spiritually? Is your pride preventing a mighty filling of the Holy Spirit, a mighty baptism of love? Do you always have to be right? Do you have to be the final authority? Is your pride preventing a mighty filling of the Holy Spirit? I want to read something briefly.

Samuel Chadwick wrote this. I love the subtitle. The preacher who burned his sermons and caught the fire of the Holy Spirit.

Just his words. And this doesn't apply to preachers. It can apply to everyone in this room.

I lived and labored for my sermons. You can say I lived and labored for men's applause. I lived and labored because of pride.

Whatever it is. And I was more concerned about their excellence and reputation than the repentance of the people. Soon, however, his sermons were exhausted and nothing had changed.

Staring defeat in the face and sensing his lack of real power. The worker who has left their first love lacks real power, and they know it. That's why they're frustrated, often.

At this point, he heard the testimony of someone who had been revitalized by an experience of the Holy Spirit. So with a few friends, he covenanted to pray and search the Scriptures until God sent revival. One evening, as he was praying over his next sermon, a powerful sense of conviction settled upon him.

His pride, his blindness, and reliance on human methods paraded before his eyes as God humbled him to the dust. Well into the night, he wrestled and repented, and he got out of his pile of precious sermons and set fire to them. The result was immediate.

The Holy Spirit fell upon him. In his own words, I could not explain what happened, but it was bigger than anything I had ever known. See, sometimes we have to burn our precious books, our precious resources, our precious knowledge, our precious accomplishments of who we are and our pride, and just allow it to lay in the dust of who Christ really is.

My body was quickened. There was a new sense of spring and vitality, a new power of endurance, and a strong man's exhilaration in big things. The tide had turned.

At his next sermon, seven souls were converted. He says, one for each of my barren years. See, you would have never heard from this person, ever.

Ever. Had not the Holy Spirit gripped his life and filled him with his passion, his love, and his boldness. So when I talk about a mighty baptism, a mighty filling of the Holy Spirit, I'm not talking about anything that you might be thinking that is weird.

I'm thinking of a person, what happens, we yield ourselves and he fills us with his Spirit. We repent of our prideful hearts and our arrogance. And that's all it is.

God says, I hear your prayer. I hear your cry. I hear your repentance.

And let me fill you with my Spirit. You'll be the same person. You'll have theology.

You'll know things. You'll understand God. But a whole new fire takes place.

A whole new aspect of Christianity comes alive.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/32/SID32000.mp3>

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