

Heart Surrender

by Steve Gallagher

Steve Gallagher's sermon emphasizes the importance of surrendering our hearts to God to achieve true spiritual transformation and avoid self-deception.

Duration: 39:35

Scripture: Isaiah 29:13, Matthew 6:33

Topics: "Surrender"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker addresses the issue of people honoring God with their words and outward actions, but neglecting to keep their hearts close to Him. He criticizes the prevalence of the prosperity gospel and the tendency to tell people what they want to hear. The speaker emphasizes the importance of seeking and embracing the truth, even if it is uncomfortable. He encourages listeners to examine their hearts and let go of any indulgences or fears that may be holding them back from fully surrendering to God. The sermon concludes with a call to return to God with all our hearts and engage in fasting as a means of drawing closer to Him.

Transcript

The following sermon was recorded during a Pure Life Ministries Chapel service in Dry Ridge, Kentucky. Please feel free to make and distribute complimentary copies to your friends. Other resources are available by visiting our website at purelifeministries.org or by calling 1-888-PURELIFE.

So I want to just start with something the Lord said through Isaiah chapter 29 verse 13. Then the Lord said, Because this people draw near with their words and honor me with their lip service, but they remove their hearts far from me, and their reverence for me consists of tradition learned by rote. In other words, by just doing the same thing over and over.

And then he goes on to talk about what he's going to do with Israel. But these words represent something. Represent a basic fundamental truth of life.

And that is that it's very easy in a religious culture to honor God with our words and our outward actions, but to keep our hearts, how do I say it, packaged separately. Protected and kept. Protected from God.

And, you know, I'm looking right now here at the back of my Bible. I have probably 35 or whatever verses about the heart. And some of the things the Bible says about the heart are very interesting.

Ecclesiastes says the hearts of men are full of evil. And Jeremiah said the heart is more deceitful than anything else and desperately wicked. There's a part of us that, you know what, I'm going to read something.

Jesus said this. Let me just kind of shift gears here for a second. That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man.

For from within, out of the heart of men proceed the evil thoughts, the fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting and wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, and foolishness. All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man. And I want to read a quote I have written down here by J.C. Ryle, who wrote a book called Holiness.

Holiness. You know, 150 years ago. It's a very powerful book.

He was a Reformed minister. I don't know if that means he was Reformed or if he taught Reformed theology. Anyway, this is what he wrote.

Sin is a disease which pervades and runs through every part of our moral constitution and every faculty of our minds. The understanding, the affections, the reasoning powers, the will are all more or less infected. The disease may be veiled under a thin covering of courtesy, politeness, good manners, and outward decorum, but it lies deep down in the Constitution.

So deeply planted are the roots of corruption that even after we are born again, these roots remain alive in the bottom of our hearts, even though it no longer has dominion. That's for someone who's been saved, of course. But there is that element of corruption that's deep within our being because we have a fallen nature.

And so the heart is kind of the heart of our being, the foundational part of our inner man. Solomon said, watch over your hearts with all diligence for from it flow the issues of life. In other words, our hearts, let me just kind of paint another picture here.

Our hearts are like, I say this in one of my talks, our hearts are like a seedbed and out of that pops thoughts. Those thoughts, if we continue to focus on them, become a mindset, a way of thinking, a mentality, develop attitudes, and so on. And then those turn into actions, and actions turn into habits, and habits turn into a lifestyle, and a lifestyle becomes a destiny.

And it all goes back to the heart. And so Solomon's saying, watch over it, protect your heart. One of the translations says, guard your heart, diligently guard it.

Because whatever your heart consists of is what's going to ultimately determine what you do in life. All right, so we have this heart that we understand is already contaminated with sin and self. And left to itself, it will destroy the person's soul.

It's the only way it can be. The person's soul must be destroyed if it's left to itself. But God offers us something different.

He offers us a new heart. But it means that our inner being, our inner kingdom, our inner world, must go through a revolution. Where self is taken off the throne of that heart, and God has allowed his rightful place on it.

All right, now let me go back to this verse, what God said about those people at that time. This people draw near with their words, but they remove their hearts. And I had a picture in my mind, and actually it had to do with this message I was going to give.

But I had this picture in my mind of a person. I was even trying to think of how I could enact it before you. And I can't come up with it, but not on such short notice.

It would be a great skit, maybe one day we can throw together. But if any of you have seen the Lord of the Rings, there's the part where Smeagol is talking to himself. The two sides of him are discussing.

Do you remember that? Yeah, can't remember verses, but you remember. You have to kill yourself to get the memory verse down. But parts in movies just seem to come so naturally, don't they? But anyway, Smeagol is having this argument with himself.

And what is it that I saw here? Oh, yeah. Hang on one second. The fool has said in his heart, there is no God.

And anyway, there is a discussion, a conversation that continually goes on inside of us. You would not believe how much you talk to yourself. One day you'll find out.

When the recording is turned on, you have to sit there for 70 years and listen to yourself. So you'll really repent of self. 70-year repentance thing.

But we talk to ourselves continually. Just a continual conversation goes on inside. And the problem is that self is corrupt through and through.

It has the poison of sin. It's been infected by the poison of sin, which means that our natural processes of our mind are utterly self-centered. So now this picture that I had in my mind, someone having their natural reasoning going on.

Let me give you a couple of biblical examples. In the Old Testament, Jeroboam I. Jeroboam has said at one point, when he became king of the northern tribes of Israel, he said to himself, you know, if I let my people go to the temple in Jerusalem, then they're going to continue going there, and they're going to see the king of Judah as their king, and I'll lose control. So you know what I'll do is I'll create a high place in Bethel and a high place in Dan, and I'll give them an alternative place that they can worship God.

This was his thought processes. It says that. He said that to himself.

He reasoned it out, you see. It says in the New Testament, at least on one occasion, in Luke I can think of, that Jesus came into a room with some Pharisees or something, and it said that, I can't remember how it said, but something like he discerned their reasonings. They were reasoning in their hearts.

And Jesus is able, of course, he's the one who can search the minds and hearts of men, and he could read what was going on inside them as they're thinking things through. The truth is, guys, our hearts are inveterate liars. That's the problem, because your heart is like a sleazy, false preacher who will flatter you and tell you everything you want to hear.

Your heart is like that. And that's the thing that false teachers all had in common, all have in common, because they're out there by the droves right now. They always tell people what people want to hear.

I just saw, I read a thing yesterday, I get this Christian business newsletter thing once a month or so, and I hardly ever read them, but I did read one yesterday, and the guy said that three out of the four top megachurches in the country, these are the biggest of the big, there's four of them, they didn't say which was the fourth one, but three out of that top four preach a prosperity message. And that's the most obvious example of telling people what they want to hear that I can think of in modern day, our setting. You want me to tell you that God wants to bless you? Oh, I'll be glad to paint some beautiful pictures about, you just put in your seed faith offering, just give it to John back there and he'll collect it for me, and God will just abundantly overflow you with material blessings.

Wouldn't you love it if I preach that way every week? Your flesh might like it, right? But you're not here because you get that kind of preaching, you're here because you get the truth. That's what keeps you here. Even as much as you hate to hear it sometimes, you'd rather have the truth than a bunch of lies, right? And I remember hearing this tape series this one time, and I didn't like the tape series.

This guy was overboard the other direction. As far as I'm concerned, he was just as much full of self as the people he was exposing. But he did this exposition on these faith teachers and stuff.

I say faith, their idea of faith, which is self. But anyway, he gave this exposition of it, and he played snippets of what the preachers were saying, and it was just this kind of flattering type of garbage that people want to hear. And you would hear the people in the background.

That's the thing that got me. It broke my heart, because you would hear the crowds in the background just amening him on. You know, tell us what we want to hear.

Well, anyway, I'm just going to use an example of a false teacher. But that goes on inside your heart all the time. The skit I'd like to do, Justin, sometime, is I'll have you up here deceiving yourself.

Okay, I will. Justin, you are so handsome. You know, I really am.

Have I told you lately how smart you are? What can I say? I mocked Todd the other day. I have no idea what was going on inside of my head. It is hard, but I just was messing with him.

He had just made these elaborate, beautiful beams for our living room. You remember that, Jack? And I was just mocking Todd, just acting like I was him, what was going on inside him, because we were all like, ooh, wow, this is really nice. And I go, I am so awesome! Don't laugh at Todd.

You do the same thing all the time. We are just that way. We are so prone to believe lies.

You know, I say it in the book *Intoxicated with Babylon*, we are vulnerable to being deceived when we want what the deceiver is presenting us. That is why we are vulnerable to being deceived. Because when the deceiver comes in, he can paint a picture.

Have you ever been lied to and the guy just really got over on you? And the way they do it, you know, is they come in and just by using words, they can paint such a picture. And, of course, there is something inside you that wants what the guy is telling you. You want to believe what he is telling you, that you are getting the deal of the century on this car or whatever.

You want to believe, let's say a girl, she wants to believe that this guy that is smooth-talking her really does love her. She wants to believe that. That is why she is vulnerable to being seduced by him.

That is what seduced means, isn't it? I used to be a master seducer when I was young. I just had a way of painting things and manipulating my words and the things that I would present to girls. And I just had a way of kind of smoothing things and presenting.

And the girl, by the time I was done talking, the girl was just absolutely convinced because I could feign sincerity so well. And when I was done, the girl was absolutely convinced that I was hers forever and ever. Well, of course she would give me her body because she wanted what I was telling her.

She wanted to believe it. And that is the way we are with ourselves. You have on this one side this master seducer, just flattery and telling you the things you want to hear.

And then on this other side, oh, really? Yeah, you know, now that you mention it, that is true. And then you have some Jeff Cologne barking at you over here, telling you what a jerk you are or whatever. And this seducer is saying, well, don't listen to him.

He's got issues anyway, you know. You know, that's true about him. I know what you mean, you know.

And how do I know I can trust what he says? And so you reason away because he's not telling you what your flesh wants to hear. And I'm telling you, man, there are people that I have dealt with for years. I've watched them deceive themselves and to this day are still deceiving themselves because they don't want to believe the truth.

They don't want to take their heart and give it to Jesus. They would rather pretend that he has it. They would rather just make this big fantasy world that they live in where they're a godly person, completely walking with God and so on, and it's nothing but a delusion.

And no matter what I come in from the outside and try to say into their inner world and present truth into their inner world, no matter what I do to try to get past that into the reality of their heart, there is so much delusion there that has been fortified by years of lying to themselves and believing their lies that I can't get in. They reason everything away. And, you know, we see that in Matthew 7 where it says, many will say to me on that day, Lord, Lord, but I never knew you, he said.

And it is such a picture of the person I'm describing that just will not take their heart out and really give it to the Lord because they're afraid of what God is going to ask of them. They want what they want and they have a will of iron and they're not going to give it up for God or anyone else. And Justin talked about painting the picture of the rich young ruler and that is such a picture of what goes on inside of every single human being who has ever lived.

Every one of them, including you and me. All of us have come to that point and we've either gone on honoring God with lip service and our words, our cheap words and have kept our hearts hidden away for ourselves or we've gone through that tiny, tiny, narrow gate, the cross of Calvary and we've allowed ourselves to be crucified with Jesus on that cross, meaning our old self-life. It's one or the other.

There is no in-between. And we'll either continue to lie to ourselves and paint this delusion where we really are. You remember the thing on the back of the application? You know what I'm talking about? You know? Oh yeah, six.

I don't want to say eight, what I really am because they might get the wrong idea but I'll put six. Let them know I mean business. Right.

You know how I could devise that whole little thing is because that's what I was in. But you know, guys, it's a picture. That is such a perfect picture and I mean it should be something that absolutely alarms us how much we could deceive ourselves to be so given over.

You know, the thing I love about dealing with you guys, guys in sexual sin, is you can't get away from it. You know what I mean? Because sexual sin... If this was Gossips Anonymous, I'd have a pretty tough time here. First of all, no one would come.

I'd have a great live-in program with no one there, you know? Because in the church, who cares if you slice people up and talk about them and slander them and lie about them and make them look bad and make yourself look good. That's perfectly acceptable in the church today. You know, as long as you deal with the veneer of niceness.

Perfectly acceptable. We can open up a Gossips Anonymous and you won't have one single person click on the website or call the phone or whatever. But the thing I love about sexual sin is, you know, that's the dirty little thing.

Even the church as it is today, as backslidden as the church is today, even that church can recognize there's something wrong with sexual sin. So we can't escape that. So you guys come here because you've got this dirty little secret that the church doesn't approve of.

And never mind about the laundry list that goes with it. Right? The laundry list that goes with it. All the other putrefying aspects of the self-life.

The ugly little things that we do that no one sees but God. You know, but it's the sexual sin that brought you here because it's not tolerated in the church. And so you had to face it and get serious with it.

It's a nasty little thing and all that. But it's not that, man. It's your heart that God wants to deal with.

It's your heart that God wants to transform. It's your heart that He wants to wash and cleanse and purify. Right? All right.

So the message today, and, you know, thank you, Justin, for completely ruining what I had in plan today. He did that. Oh, man, I tell you.

It's not easy being here. I just want you to know that. You know, but I have all these verses about the heart.

And the wonderful thing about it is we have this thing called the will. Hallelujah. Hallelujah.

We have this thing called the will. It's like a gate. You know, and we can turn that gate anytime we want.

In other words, you're not held captive to what your heart has been like in the past. You have this gate, and anytime you want, you can swing the gate the other way. You can bring your heart forth completely.

You can get out of yourself and all the things that keep you bound up or whatever. You can get your will because God gave you a free will. He has given you the ability by turning to Him to be freed.

Listen to some of these verses. I may have to look this one up here. Yet, even now, declares the Lord, return to me with all your heart and with fasting.

When's the last time you have fasted? I guess they won't let you, will they? Well, with fasting, weeping, and mourning. And rend your heart and not your garments. In other words, the inner man, not the exterior fake stuff, but the inner man.

Rend it. Rip it. Now return to the Lord your God, for He is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, abounding in loving kindness, and relenting of evil.

Who knows whether He will not turn and relent and leave a blessing behind Him. Praise the Lord. Psalm 119 says, Seek Him with all your heart.

Solomon said, Your word have I treasured in my heart. David said, Pour out your heart before Him. And he also said, A broken and a contrite heart, as we heard last week, you will not despise.

He prayed, Create in me a clean heart. And I have these different things, a tender heart, a proud heart, a prepared heart, a humbled heart, an unfeeling heart, a heart that regards wickedness, imaginations of the heart, a heart that spurns reproof, a backslider in heart, eternity in the heart, Satan filled someone's heart. Talks about the intentions of the heart and the eyes of your heart, and a circumcised heart.

Moses said, You will find the Lord if you search for Him with all your heart. And James talks about he who deceives his own heart. So, you know, no matter what has been in the past, men, ladies, no matter what has been there in the past, today is a new day.

Today is a new day. Praise the Lord. And there's something you can do.

And it's what Justin began the meeting with. He painted such a beautiful picture of what goes on inside each of us. And the story of this rich young ruler who had his thing, and Judy pictured it, painted it herself.

She had her thing, which was comfort and being in control. She didn't want to go to Africa or something or other, you know, whatever the Lord might ask of her. What are you afraid the Lord's going to ask of you? Maybe there's something you're holding on to.

Deep down inside you, you know what it is. Some little indulgence that you love to give over to. Not necessarily sexual, but some, maybe it's just some pride thing.

Or maybe it's some flesh thing. Or maybe it's some form of entertainment. Maybe it's food.

Or maybe it's whatever. I don't know. But maybe you have something that you don't want God to demand it of you.

And so you keep it locked away. You keep your heart locked away. Because you're afraid if you really give God your heart, that he's going to ask you to do something you don't want to do.

Or give up something you really do not want to give up. And you know something, you can paint your picture and live in your little fantasy world now. But the day is going to come when we will all be stripped bare of everything.

And what's really in the heart is going to be exposed. And the realities of your life and the way you lived your life and who you lived your life for, who was in control, who was in the center of everything, is going to be exposed. And it doesn't matter what you tell yourself now because the truth will come out.

Right? The truth is going to come out. It's going to come forth, Jesus said. I think in Luke 12 or something.

It's going to come forth. And I'm pleading with you. Everyone in this room, I'm pleading with you.

Humble yourself. Humble yourself. Acknowledge the lies that you've been telling yourself and loving to hear.

Acknowledge them to someone else. So you'll get it out in the open and in the light. Be ruthless.

Now. So you won't have to face that kind of judgment later. Amen? God loves you.

And men, He loves you, but He wants to set you free. He wants you to be free when you leave here. Free.

Really free. He wants those hard issues to be dealt with. No matter what you have to go through, He wants them to be dealt with so when you leave here, you'll be right.

That's what He wants. That's why you came here. You didn't come here to get frothy sermons and be flattered.

You came here to get the truth that would set you free, right? And you were willing. You understood there was going to be a price to pay and that it was going to be painful in some ways. Well, hallelujah! That's part of it.

Getting it carved out of you and being set free wonderfully. Free. Free.

Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord. And He's been doing it in this place for a long time.

Many men have come through this place before you and have gone through these same struggles, these same deep heart issues. They've faced the same things. It's the same scenario.

The rich young ruler throwing himself at Jesus' feet. Master, what do I do to inherit life? How do I get free from this sexual addiction thing? Because no one likes me because I'm a sex addict. And Jesus goes right into the heart and He puts His finger right in there in your inmost being and starts dealing with you.

Are you going to be courageous and humble yourself before Him? Or are you going to continue to fool around and lie to yourself? Men, don't take offense at this. I don't mean to be offensive and I sure don't want to hurt anybody. But every one of you came in here as an inveterate liar to yourself and probably to a large extent to those around you.

But Jesus wants to put truth in your heart. He wants to do it and He will do it if you'll let Him. Some of you have things that you need to confess to your counselor.

Some of you have done things since you've been here that you've continued to hold in the darkness because you don't want to face the music or whatever. How can God bless you and give you what you want when you're lying? So you've got to come forth to your counselor. Or maybe things in your past that you've never told anyone else.

Men, you don't have to get into all the little terrible details, but some of you need to come forth with some of that stuff. Get it out. Just to one person, your counselor, someone you can trust.

You know, he understands. He's had his own dark secrets that he's had to do that with. This is a place where truth reigns.

We don't want to be in this place in that same thing of flattering ourselves and lying to ourselves. Amen? Savior, I just lift up every single person to You here today, Lord. You just completely hijack this service, Holy Spirit, and it's okay with me.

I'm just happy that You have had it Your way. You know what You want to accomplish. I wanted to give a nice little message and everyone could walk out feeling good about themselves and I wouldn't have to feel like I beat up on the men again or whatever, but You had another idea.

You wanted to beat up on them and that's okay with me, Lord, whatever. You're the King and You reign in this place, not Steve Gallagher, and we're grateful You hijack this service. And Lord, I just pray that You'll help these men to get brutally honest with themselves.

Help them to envision that sleazy liar, the devil, in their ears, flattering and patronizing and painting nice pictures to just lure them in because there's something inside them that wants what He's offering. God, make him seem for what he is. Expose that filthy thing, I pray, Lord, in every man's heart, every woman's heart.

Lord, I pray that You'll open their hearts to the truth, that they would examine their hearts and that they would truly, as an act of their will, take their heart and hand it to Jesus and say, Lord, it's Yours forever. I don't care if You want me to go to Africa. I don't care if You want me to scrub toilets at Pure Life or what You want of me.

I would rather be clean and pure and saved than to go on in my own wicked ways. And I pray, Lord, that people will come to that place and be made free and whole in Christ. Amen.

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