

The Need for a Cleansed Heart

by Steve Gallagher

This sermon delves into the profound teachings from Mark 7, emphasizing the importance of true repentance and inner transformation over religious traditions. It highlights the need for a genuine cleansing of the heart, addressing the deception of outward religiosity and the critical nature of spiritual worship. The message underscores the significance of turning to God in repentance, seeking a new nature, and experiencing a deep connection with the Holy Spirit for true spiritual renewal.

Scripture: Isaiah 29:13, Luke 6:46, Psalm 51:10, Ezekiel 36:25, Romans 2:29, John 4:24, 2 Corinthians 7:10, James 4:8, Revelation 3:20

Topics: "True Repentance", "Inner Transformation"

Description

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Transcript

And that came out of being assigned this story in Mark 7, also in Matthew 15. But I studied in Mark 7 because it's a little richer and fuller of dealing with it. Mark 7 is really one of the most important chapters in the Bible, believe it or not.

And I say that because this exchange that Jesus had with the Pharisees, in this exchange he absolutely pulled the rug out from under their false religious system. And he also exposes one of the greatest deceptions that are in America today. We'll get to that after a while.

It begins with the Pharisees criticizing Jesus and his disciples for not going through the ritual hand cleansing, which was the custom of the day. And that's all it was, was a custom. It was a tradition.

And you notice that they don't accuse Jesus or his disciples of breaking the law. They accuse him of breaking with the traditions. And, you know, Jesus doesn't deny it.

In fact, he absolutely embraces that. He gladly breaks with their traditions and actually has quite a disdain for their traditions. And what he had done to create a rupture between the Jewish people and God.

Now, the Pharisees understood the one aspect of this, these Levitical laws, and that was to create a distinction in the Jewish nation that would set it apart from all the pagan nations that surrounded it. The whole culture was rife with this idolatrous religion, the system that was in that whole Mesopotamia Middle East region. These fertile cults and their disgusting practices, all in the name of supposed worshipping God.

So the Pharisees, which, you know, the name means the separated ones, they had that right. They understood that these Levitical laws were all about making a separation between God's people and the pagans. So they understood that.

What they missed was the heart of the law. They missed the heart of God's sacrificial system, which was placed there with the Jewish people as a means for them to express their love and adoration and worship to God. That is why it was inaugurated in the first place.

It was all based on the Shema, which is in Deuteronomy 6. Here, O Israel, there is only one God, and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. That was the core basis of the entire Pentateuch, just in case you were wondering. Now I, you know, I've been looking at this for a couple of weeks, praying over it, and asking the Lord, because there is so much in this passage.

It's really hard. This could have been four sermons, really, easily. But this is what I was assigned, and so I'm going to cover it as best I can.

And I asked the Lord, you know, what is it that you want us to see for our lives today? How does it relate to our lives? Okay, that's all fine and good, what was going on in first century Judaism in Palestine and all that, but what about us? What do you want us to see in this passage? And I believe the Lord gave me four takeaways that we can look at here today. Number one, we must make sure that we don't focus on the outward at the expense of the inward. You see it in verse six, and he said to them, rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, you actors, as it is written, this people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.

In other words, their lip service, the things they said, the image that they presented to everyone around them, whether it's in words or in actions or whatever, the image was an image of piety, an image of godliness, an image of I am right with the Lord. They put that image out there, but the reality of their inward life was something altogether different. Now this passage here that Jesus is quoting, this is an interesting thing.

First of all, you know, this is one of those occasions where the law of double reference can be applied. The law of double reference, meaning that at the time the Holy Spirit gave that prophet an unction to speak to the people of his day, but that it also applied to people far off in the future, usually those of us in the last days, most prophecies. But anyway, the other thing is, and don't lose sight of this, who was it that was putting these words in Isaiah's mouth that day? It was Jesus.

It was Jesus. And Jesus is speaking through Isaiah, and you, trust me, Jesus can see 600 years later him standing there talking to these Pharisees. It did apply to the Jewish people of Isaiah's day, but just as much it applied to the hypocrites during his time, and also during our time, and everything in between.

These words are applicable to all people who would ever claim to have a life with God. And what was the point that the Pharisees and hypocrites in general are very careful about the outward things of their religion, their practices, and so on, their traditions, the things that they do, and the things that others can

see them doing, but were utterly careless about the inward life. They focused and majored on the petty minutiae things of their religion at the expense of the real issues of substance in the spiritual life, which is a life of mercy, a life of loving God, a life of obedience, and those sorts of things.

The Pharisaical system was a product of centuries of adding petty rules, endless minutiae, and ridiculous trivialities, one on top of another until it was impossible for any man to live under the burden of it. These men are all up in arms because the disciples didn't do the ritual hand-washing and stuff. But I'll tell you what, that same kind of stuff goes on in churches today, Christian churches today.

Now, David, you know, he lived under this Jewish traditional system. It wasn't the same as the Pharisees created later, but he lived under the law. And when he gave over to sin, I almost said fell into sin, I gotta not say that because he did not fall into sin, he willfully went into sin.

But when he did, and once he saw what he had done, listen to what he said, wash me. He understood the purpose of the Levitical cleansing rituals. They were as a shadow of something deeper that God wanted his people to understand, the need to have a heart that's cleansed from sin and the defilement of sin.

So he said, wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. Purify me with hyssop and I shall be clean. Wash me and I shall be whiter than snow.

Create in me a clean heart, oh God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. That is the heart of God to all sinners ever. And I hope that cry is in every one of your hearts.

And I'm not just pointing at the men either. All of us need to have that kind of a passion for purity before the Lord. The ceremonial laws had their place.

There was a reason they came from God, the original ones anyway. They had their place, but the Lord is always, always, always mostly concerned with what is going on in our hearts, in our inward lives. And you see it come out when he through Ezekiel and through Jeremiah, when he gave them a taste of what would come when the Messiah showed up, the new covenant.

And in that new covenant says, the Lord says, I will sprinkle clean water on you and you will be clean. I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. Praise God.

The Lord had the desire to take this people into the promised land of moral and inward purity. The Pharisees didn't understand this and they didn't want to understand this. Because just like in the same way that many Christians today can easily live by a list of do's and don'ts.

Listen, just tell me what I'm supposed to do and what I'm not supposed to do. Just give me my list and I'll do this thing. People are happy to have that.

Why? Because it doesn't require what the Lord is looking for, which is to fight for inward purity. Just give me the list. Anybody can live by a list of rules, but it's something altogether different to walk with purity of heart before the Lord.

You know, Isaiah, Jesus calls it a prophecy. Isn't that interesting? He usually said, you've heard that it was said or written or whatever. But in this case, and I didn't take the time, actually just now thinking of it.

I didn't take the time to look to see if he's ever said that before, but I can't think of any other time he said anything like that. That he alluded to some Old Testament statement as a prophecy, but here he calls it a

prophecy. And here is the, take it to the aharit, the far end of the matter.

This is a prophecy. And what he's saying to these people, these Pharisees, and to the people in Isaiah's day, he's saying, oh, you want to keep your heart far from me? You want your heart far, far away from me. Okay, I'm going to give you exactly what you're asking for.

Forever, forever, eternally, you will be separated from God. That's what they wanted, and that's what they got. The second thing I felt like the Lord showed me out of this passage was we must make sure that our forms of worship are actually worship.

We just sang some songs, some choruses, one hymn and some choruses. And some of the words in there, that one chorus that you guys were singing, I wonder if you even meant it. Some of you anyway.

Verse seven, but in vain do they worship me. In vain do they worship me. This is Jesus speaking to the Jews of Isaiah's day, and to the Pharisees of his day, and to the church, to much of the church anyway today.

In vain do they worship me. The living Bible says their worship is worthless. The New Living translation, their worship is a farce.

The Williams translation, their worship of me is an empty show, the passion. They pretend to worship me, but their worship is nothing more than the empty traditions of men. This brings out what does it mean to be a worshiper? Very important thought to consider.

We all, I assume everyone in here, purports to be a worshiper of God. What does it mean to be a worshiper? You know, we Christians have our own forms of vain worship. We know our hymns by heart, but do our hearts absorb or express the depth of truth in those hymns? We sing praise choruses that are meant to emotionally connect us to the Lord, but are we just mindlessly singing along with everyone else? In Isaiah's version of this quote, the Lord also said their reverence for me consists of tradition learned by rote.

In other words, mouthing songs and platitudes without any reality, just saying and singing the same things over and over and over and over until they're just cement in our minds. We know all the sayings, we know all the scriptures, we know the songs, but it's like a disconnect for many people between what they know in their heads, what they remember in their minds, and the reality of their daily life inwardly. Jesus said God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.

True worship is an, I don't know exactly how to say it, but it's spirit to spirit. It's a very deep connection of a person's own spirit with the spirit of the living God, and it must be done in truth, in reality, not just mouthing words. Worship to the Lord should mean adoration and obeisance to him, submission to him from the heart, but how many people really professing Christians in church today, maybe, really the reality of their hearts when God looks in and sees going on inside of them is worship of other things rather than him.

Romans 1 talks about worshipping and serving the creature rather than God. I did that, I was guilty of that for a long time. Revelation 9 speaks of worshipping demons that are behind those idols, and Revelation 13 tells of a day when people, by far the vast majority of people on this earth, whether they call themselves Christians, Buddhists, Muslims, whatever, are going to worship a man who is demon-possessed.

It's very well possible to do all of this while maintaining an outward consecration to God. The Pope of Cemetery says, worship is the adoration of the heart when it loses sight of self in the contemplation of the glory of God. The worship of the Pharisees was full of self.

They sought not the glory of God. They put the commandments of man above his holy word. In truth, they worshiped themselves and not God, for it was their own profit, their own advancement, their own honor which they loved with all their heart.

And that which we love with the whole heart is the object of our worship. Let us take heed to ourselves. Sobering words for us today to consider.

The third thing I felt the Lord showed me out of this is we must make sure that our traditions are firmly grounded in Scripture. Verses eight and nine, neglecting the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men. You're experts at setting aside the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition.

Now from our vantage point, looking back, it's very easy to understand and see what the Pharisees did. You know, that's 2,000 years ago. We can see it objectively.

It's very clear what they did. Just little by little they changed true heartfelt worship of the Lord and took it through this metamorphosis process, this transformation process, until by the first century it became something completely different. And we can see that.

But you know it's different when you're in the midst of it. You can't see the forest for the trees, you know. I was thinking of this, I don't know how many of you have seen the Hobbit movies and that one movie where, I think it was, what's his name? The Hobbit guy.

Frodo. That's what I was going to say. No, it's Bilbo.

So Bilbo climbs up in the tree, remember that? And he could see the mount of something or other they were heading for. Some mountain, there was a dragon there and all that. But you know, when they were down in the midst of that dark jungle type environment, they can't see.

And that's the way it is for us. It's just, you know, it's not anyone's fault. It's just the way it is.

We can't tell what's going on because we're just so immersed in the culture of our Christian heritage here in America today. But I'll tell you one thing, we do this ourselves. We have our own traditions and we have our own elders.

And our elders are just like the Pharisees. Look back to the early Pharisees during the Maccabees and all of that's when it all started. They could look back and how, you know, down through the years, these different famous doctors and stuff, they were venerated and all that.

Well, we do the same thing. You know, big chunk of the church looks back at John Calvin. Another chunk of the church looks back at John Wesley.

You know, we have our traditions, our elders, and on top of, down through whatever they came up with, whatever their perspectives of the Christian life was, were back then, you know, then tradition started adding to it until today, you know, it has become something much bigger. And the thing we have to be careful about is that those traditions don't become greater and bigger than the Word of God. And it happens, brothers, I'm telling you.

Sisters too, I'm talking to you as well. It happens. And let me tell you one way that it happens is in seminaries, because seminaries are where all the academics are at.

And they're the ones who determine what the budding young preachers are going to be taught and how they're going to handle things and so on. So the seminarians are the ones who kind of create these things. And one of the ways they do this is what's called systematic theology.

Now, I am not a big fan of systematic theology, and I'll tell you why. Because systematic theology is just a nice way of saying someone's opinion has been meshed with Scripture and has created a system. And that system then, with all the adherents who follow that tradition, that system becomes the filter by which they look at Scripture.

And so, you know, I cannot tell you how many times I've listened to a sermon from whatever tradition, denominational background, whatever, and the Bible says, clear as can be, make some statement, but it's explained away because it doesn't fit in with their system of belief. You know, now let me just say something about the biggest split really in the church is Calvinism, Arminianism. And personally, I believe that if you can look at this Bible with an open heart, with an open mind, and a sincere heart, you cannot get away from the fact that both of those systems are true.

The problem people have comes with pride. My system is the right one, and anything that's different is wrong. That's just pride and immaturity.

The truth is, it's so much greater than any human being can comprehend and think that they know. It's just pride. The Almighty is the only one who knows.

And so, if you have a denominational background, a doctrinal understanding of things, just hold it kind of loosely. You know, when there's a segment of the church that sees things differently, don't get a hold of yours and demand that it's the only way. It's just pride and immaturity if you do that.

None of that's in my notes, so I don't know where I'm at now. Look, let me just get it down to the bare bones here with this point. Whatever your tradition is, whatever your doctrinal background is, just make sure that it's leading you to love the Lord with all your heart and leading you to obey Him.

If you've got those two, I'm good with your tradition, all right? No problem, as long as it brings you there. And that's, I think, what the Lord would feel, too. Number four, we must make sure our hearts have truly been cleansed.

We must make sure our hearts have truly been cleansed. Now, at Pure Life Ministries, it would seem as though all this talk of cleansing has to do with sexual issues and so on, but it isn't. It's not limited to that, okay? That's not what we're talking about.

That's not it. We're not talking or not focusing on that. That's part of it.

If you look at that list in 21 and 22, those kinds of things form a big part of the things, the 12 different kinds of evil thinking that Jesus lays out there. It's definitely an issue, it's just not the whole issue. We need to be cleansed of a lot of things, you know? Envy, is it there? How many of us ever get a message on envy? Well, we should.

Tell your pastor, preach a message on envy next Sunday. He'll appreciate that. The whole point of those, you know, Jesus laying out all those things was just, he's just kind of, he didn't cover it all.

You know, there's so many kinds of wickedness. Man, how could you cover it all? But he's just trying to give you a sample of the kinds of things that go on inside the heart of a depraved human being. Depraved meaning, you know, just a fallen nature, a person with a fallen nature.

This need to be cleansed is vital. It's vital because it's really at the basis of how people are made right with God, how people's hearts are cleansed, how people escape the sentence of hell and are admitted into heaven. This is a vital issue.

The Jews believed that they were entitled to heaven simply by virtue of the fact that they were Jewish. Well, unless you're a tax collector. If you're a tax collector, you're on your own, pal.

You don't get any grace here. But really, that was their whole basis. And you know something, in America, we have a very powerful deception at work in America.

And that is that good people go to heaven and bad people, meaning people like Adolf Hitler and Charles Manson and people like that, they go to hell. But all us good people, we're going to heaven, you know. And it's just all through the culture, that belief system.

It's amazing how powerful that lie is. People either believe nothing happens when you die and you just go into oblivion or that they're going to heaven, you know. And so when people die, you always hear them say, oh yeah, he's up there watching over us or I felt his presence.

Well, you didn't feel any presence. You probably felt a demon is what you probably felt. Where am I at? So, you know, this idea of good people go to heaven, the Christians understand that's not true.

We understand that, you know. But I'm telling you, you cannot trust your heart because we find ways to get around things. And the way that we've gotten around that, we know it's not true.

We know it's false. So the way we've gotten around it is through the hyper-grace teachings. And the hyper-grace teachings basically are if you go to church, if you identify yourself as a Christian, especially an evangelical, and you stay away from terrible sins, then you are entitled and assured a place in heaven.

That's kind of what it is, because God's grace covers everything. Well, that's not true. Not like that.

Not the way it's presented and all of that. All right. So I can see you're rather skeptical.

So I'm going to do something a little different here today. It's going to take eight minutes to accomplish this. Can you hold eight minutes? That was pretty underwhelming.

We're going to do something special. Josh Rowan is going to come up and he's going to read a satirical article that I wrote a number of years ago. And the title of the article is Hell's Best Picture Award.

How many of you ever watched the Academy Awards? Okay. God bless all of you that didn't. I haven't seen it in 50 years, but I know it goes on.

So this is the one that goes on in hell. Well, at least it did this one time. And I was allowed to witness this whole thing.

So Josh is going to come up and share what I wrote, because he's a better reader than I am. It would be a night to remember in the irreverent halls of hell. Hundreds of motion pictures from the 20th century had been considered before the impious committee narrowed their list down to four films.

The coveted award would be presented to the movie that had influenced the greatest number of people down the path towards damnation. But not one of the scowling, mocking, screaming demons present that evening could have guessed the winner. The first finalist was unquestionably a crowd favorite.

The Exorcist had long since been recognized as the motion picture that most glorified their efforts among mankind. Even human organizations such as Entertainment Weekly and Movies.com had named it the scariest movie of all time. Demons and warlocks alike banged their tables and fiendish delight at the memory of its diabolical impact on the U.S. public.

Another commendable entrant was Deep Throat, nominated for its part in launching the adult entertainment industry and introducing smut into mainstream America. It was nothing short of devilish genius that compelled this second-rate film into movie theaters across the land. It did more to sexualize the American culture than any other film.

Many heads nodded their approval at this selection throughout the banquet hall. With the nomination of Casablanca, the art of understated insinuation received due recognition. An enormously popular movie with humans, this 40s flick brilliantly glamorized adultery.

Ingrid Bergman's performance as the woman who could not control her emotional lust for Humphrey Bogart's character was so compelling that even the most moral people rooted for her to dump her devoted husband in favor of her ex-lover. Certainly, the fact that humans consistently voted it as one of the greatest movies of all time suggested its influential nature. As worthy as these three motion pictures were in their own right, they would not receive the coveted statue being presented that night.

Everyone present was wondering what movie could have possibly produced more evil effects on mankind than these worthy finalists. And the winner in the best picture category is The Anticipation Mountain, as the mischievous announcer allowed a long drawn-out pause before exclaiming, it's a wonderful life. The announcement unleashed a torrent of reaction from the audience.

First, there was a deafening silence of utter disbelief. Unclean spirits and ghouls frantically looked at each other in bewilderment. Then the groans of despair began to rise, which quickly escalated into screeches of anger.

But that's one of the most wholesome movies Hollywood's ever produced, shouted one angry demon. Even the evangelicals love it, cried another. Who made this stupid decision, demanded another incredulously.

Don't these morons understand that the message of that movie is a good life makes a difference in the world? The impish presenter cringed and squirmed under the growing fury. The wild, shrieking demonic horde threatened to erupt into a full-scale riot. It was at that moment that Apollyon, that great dragon from the lower regions of the abyss, suddenly appeared from behind the curtain, sending the terrified announcer scurrying away.

I think that once you grasp what this movie accomplished, cooed the hulking, deformed principality condescendingly, you will agree that this was the right choice tonight. No one believed the great liar, even

if they were too intimidated to voice it. The adversary was too arrogant to be disconcerted by their cynical glares.

Still, he knew he must win them over. I understand that the wickedness promoted by movies like *The Exorcist* and *Deep Throat* accomplished much for our kingdom, he reasoned. But you must keep in mind that their blatant evil is also the very thing that caused many humans to avoid them, or in any case, to steal themselves against their influences.

And yes, it is true that the enemy scored points when *It's a Wonderful Life* conveyed the perception that a good life is meaningful on earth. But there is an underlying message in this movie that completely overshadows those losses. I want you to consider George Bailey, continued the monster.

The mere mention of his name magically produced a video clip of Jimmy Stewart on an enormous screen behind him. The scene was of a bitter and despondent Bailey throwing down shots of whiskey at the bar, muttering to God that he wasn't a praying man, yet finding himself in such a quandary that he had nowhere else to turn. The horrible demon God let this image settle into the devious minds of his devious audience.

You see this man, he demanded, pointing at the screen. He is the personification of what Americans believe about themselves. Good people willing to take a stand against evil.

Here's what makes this film such a valuable advocate for our cause. The underlying message of it is that God goes to bat for the George Bailey's of life. They need only ask and help will immediately be dispatched from heaven.

The fallen angel paused for effect before going on. The message is that God is obligated to send average Joes to heaven and that it's only evil men like Mr. Potter who go to hell. You have to understand that humans want to be deceived, he continued.

They love the fact that there are Mr. Potters in this world because it reinforces the notion that there are good people who deserve to go to heaven. Can't you see that it's the very fact that Americans see themselves as George Bailey on their way to heaven despite their godless lifestyles that makes this movie so devastatingly effective. The mood in the great hall rapidly was becoming more buoyant and cheerful and some of the more discerning demons were even nodding their hideous heads in agreement.

It's been over 70 years since that movie came out, he concluded. And this false notion that so-called good people go to heaven is more deeply entrenched in the American psyche than ever. Even simple humans are beginning to catch on to the utter brilliance of our plan.

If you don't believe me, just listen to this, he stated, preparing his audience for the coup de grace of his argument. He spoke the words slowly to allow them to sink into every wicked heart present. The Los Angeles Times recently did a study that said for every American who believes he's on his way to hell, 120, he stopped and repeated that number, 120 of them think that they are going to heaven.

The eruption of blasphemous singing and disgusting revelry confirmed that he had been right all along. Case closed, dispute settled, all dissension silenced. And so it was that one of America's most endearing and beloved family oriented movies also made its way into the hearts of hell's angels.

Thank you, Josh. You did a fine job, didn't he? Did you get the point? What's the moral of that story? That we're fallen beings with fallen natures, that we are not entitled to heaven, that the needed cleansing of the heart comes through turning from our rebellious past and turning to God in faith. All right, I'm going to bring this to a close by just adding to that thought a little bit.

And here's the overriding issue, that we need a new nature and that new nature comes only through repentance. I recently listened to a Zach Poonan message and he gave an illustration that I liked, and Pastor Nate will especially love this illustration as he waits in anticipation. Let's say that you have a pig, and you want to take the pig for a walk through a field and there's some mud puddles and stuff, you know, kind of scattered around.

In order to get that pig from one end of the field to the other without it going into a mud puddle, you're going to have to put a leash on it, right? There's no other way you're going to get from A to B without that pig going into the mire. That's not going to happen. That leash is a picture of the law.

The law was given to us as a way for us to understand the difference between good and evil, right and wrong, um, defiled and undefiled. That's why the law was given to us, but the law was only a tutor leading us to something higher and better, right? Who wants to live their life by trying to obey all those laws? That wasn't what Jesus died for. Now, Nate says, consider this.

Take a cat on a walk through that field, and I promise you it will do its utmost to avoid those puddles and that mud. Why? Because cats like to be clean. And that's a picture, sort of, of the spirit-led life.

Meaning, meaning that the cat is just doing what's natural to it, right? Just like the pig is. Now, you know, let me just add one more thing in here. You can tell if a person is religious in his Christian life or if he's spiritual by what happens if he happens to fall into a mud pit.

A religious person will first look around and see if anyone noticed him, and if anyone noticed that he got filthy, he'll clean himself up. But a spiritual person, just like a cat, let me put it this way, Bella could care less who's watching. If she gets mud on her, she is going to clean herself right there in front of everybody or nobody.

It doesn't matter. And if you're walking with the Lord and you somehow get defiled by sin, you are going to cleanse yourself. It's going to be second nature to you to want to cleanse yourself.

But if you're a hypocrite, if your life is all about the outward and what other people see, and it's all about your image, the only thing you're concerned about is did anyone see? Does anyone know? Are they aware of it? Now, the truth is, and you may not like this, but we are Gentile dogs. I don't think there's any Jewish believers in here. No, no one's copping to it, if they are.

We're Gentile dogs. We are pigs by nature. We just are.

We are drawn to defiled things. What would happen if a pig fell into the slop and jumped out and all of a sudden started licking himself all over trying to get clean? We would say, that's a miracle. That's what the Christian life should look like.

That is the life of a real believer, someone who has been changed and transformed in the inner life. Listen, you may have been born into a Christian family, or you may have been raised in a church with strong traditions, but ultimately you must experience deep inner repentance to receive a new nature. You know,

repentance is shown by the Hebrew and Greek terms.

In the Old Testament, the term literally means to turn. The term means to turn. And in the New Testament, the term, metanoia, means to develop new thinking, a new way of seeing things, a new perspective.

We need both. You see, if you change your outward behavior, but you don't change your inward life, then you're simply a person who has learned religion, learned to be religious. Or by the same token, if you've changed the way you see things, and there's a lot of people that came into the evangelical movement, started going to church, and their perspectives on things changed.

They started hating abortion and stuff like that, but their way they actually live their life, Monday to Saturday, doesn't really change, then they're just in some sort of delusion. True repentance begins in the heart and extends its way into the way you live your life. Last night, Kathy and I watched Risen.

I think we play that for the guys, don't we? Yeah, we should. It's an excellent movie. Oh, by the way, here's the magazine our article was in.

In that movie, at one point, he makes this statement, I will never be the same again. And I said to Kathy, when he said that, I said, what did I say? You don't know. I said, that is true of every Christian.

That's what I said. She's my favorite fan, by the way. I said, that's true of every Christian.

And also true is if there hasn't been a change, that person is not a Christian. I'll repeat that again. If there hasn't been that inward change, and that change in behavior can only mean that the person isn't a true believer.

That statement should be true of all of us. I will never be the same again. Josh, why don't you come up on the keyboard? I remember about 25 years ago, we had just moved here onto this property.

And I was going through a period, just dry, so dry, spiritually, just so disconnected from the Lord. And I was pleading with God, please, God, you've got to give me a breakthrough. You've got to come to me.

You've got to immerse me in your spirit. And I was expecting, because I am a man of faith, I was expecting the Lord to answer that prayer. And I was expecting him to just engulf me in his presence and love on me and make me really feel much better and bring me out of this despair and discouragement I was experiencing.

But instead, it happened a little differently. We went to, we attended a church. I was checking the church out to see if it may be a place we want to bring the students.

And so I didn't have the students with us. It was just Kathy, me and one of the staff. And the pastor preached that Sunday and out of Luke 6, about what it really means to be a Christian.

And I was just as, felt so dead and dry at the end of that message. I just wanted to get out of there, you know, that's how I felt. But I felt the Lord, he had an altar call and no one was responding.

And I'm just like, can we just leave? You know, can we wrap this up? But I felt the Lord pushing me. You need to go to that altar call. And I'm like, Lord, you don't understand.

I'm here to check them out. This isn't the time to do this. I'll do it at home.

And I, but I felt him pushing me and just got a sheer obedience to the Lord. I went forward. They didn't even know, you know, anything about me.

I'm just some guy just visiting the church. And that walk up there took forever. It just, yeah, I did not want to do it.

I was not in it. I just wasn't feeling it. But as soon as my knees hit that carpet, I broke.

I mean, I really broke. And all I could see was my lack of love and mercy, how hard I was on other people. And, and I just wept and wept and wept that day.

And I had snot all over the place. Made a total spectacle of myself in front of this church. But you know what? I didn't care at that point because God was dealing with me.

And you know what came out of that? Times of refreshing. Many of you guys, and listen, I'm not saying this as a put down, all right? It's just reality. The group decides many of you have really been feeling sorry for yourself this last week.

But the answer isn't for the Lord to just come in and pat you on the back. The answer is to have the, the deeps broken up. To let the Lord break up the staleness, the dryness, the dead religion inside you that may still be holding on.

The form of religion, the form of godliness. The Lord wants to get into your inner man, the depth of your being. That's what he wants.

He wants to get in there and make a change, a dramatic, powerful change. And I know from what the staff has told me, there are men in here that has not happened for. You're in a delusion.

And I know it has happened for many of you, but even those that it's happened for, maybe you've just kind of gotten out of off track over time. And you've become stale again with the Lord. He wants to bring you into times of refreshing, guys.

Not just you, but the visitors as well. You're sitting in a place where the presence of God is at right now. And he may very well be speaking to you visitors.

You're just as important to him as these men, and probably just as much in need. Believe it or not, because it's not the level of sin that matters. It's the level of love for God that matters.

So what I'm going to do, we're not going to have an altar call because we don't have room. And plus, I also want the visitors to feel free to humble themselves and respond to what God is saying to you this morning. Maybe if you feel like you've gotten dry and stale and you need a fresh touch from the Lord, I want you to stand up right now and I'm going to pray for you.

Lord, many of these guys have really sincerely been trying. They've got demons coming at them from every which way. They're tired.

They're discouraged. They're struggling. They feel like there's no hope.

Lord, I pray that you will come in and do what only you can do. Only you, Lord, can reach the inner man. Only you can bring about transformation, Lord.

Only you can break up the depths. Only you can expose the realities of the kind of sin and religiosity and deadness and so on inside of a man or a woman. I pray that you will expose it right now to them.

I don't need to know about but to them, Lord, open their eyes right now and show them where they are really at spiritually. Lord, we're in a culture that wants to dump down the things of God. Even in the church culture, dump these things down so there's no expectation on us, so we can live our comfortable American carnal lives and not feel guilty.

That's the culture. It's in the very air we breathe here, Lord. We're not in the hallowed, sacred halls of heaven where you are at, Lord.

We're in a foul, defiled culture that hates you. And even the church culture is so full of apathy and compromise. It seems that there's very few who love you, Lord.

God, we need a breakthrough that can only come from you. This is all we know, Lord. It's all around us.

It's in our hearts to be that way, to be apathetic, to not care, to justify ourselves. I'm asking you, Lord, to do a mighty work here inside men's hearts and women's hearts. Do a mighty work here, Lord.

January 1st, 2023 would be a real breakthrough, a new year, a new life. I pray, Holy Spirit, you would sweep through our souls, blow out of us the foul, contaminating memories of things we have seen and done. Purge it out of us with hyssop, I pray, O God.

Cleanse us inside, Lord. And those who haven't been tainted by porn and stuff like that, but know very well what it means to be involved in dead religion. Help them, Lord.

Bring life to them, Lord. Life into their souls. Lord, we have in our hearts a hardening agent, just like is in concrete.

Throw a little water on it, and it just is going to harden. And our hearts just naturally grow cold and hard towards the things of God. We slide away so easily, Lord.

It's usually imperceptible at first. And before we know it, we are somewhere else that we did not intend to be in our hearts. We've grown cold again.

We've grown hard to your voice. The rebellious attitudes are starting to blossom again. Critical thinking is flourishing.

Lustful thinking. Hostile attitudes towards others. Prideful mindsets.

Getting offended over every little thing. That's the human nature, Lord, that you saw into that day. That those Pharisees were absolutely blind to.

Lord, we have no hope nowhere else to turn but to you. But we are turning to you, Lord. We're asking, God.

We're asking. Come in and do only what you can do, Lord. Breathe life into our souls, God.

Breathe life into our souls. Life us, oh God. Life us.

Fill us with your Holy Spirit and fire, Lord. Break up the fallow ground, God. Break it up.

Break it up, Lord. Please, not another day of hardness of heart. Break up the fallow ground.

We have a great, great need for a touch from you, Lord. You know every single individual here. You know what every single person, you know them intimately.

You are on intimate terms with every person, whether they belong to you or not. You know them thoroughly. You know their struggles.

You know what they battle with. I pray, Lord, that you will, in your mercy, come to each heart and each person and minister life as you see fit, whatever that may mean, whether it's great conviction or whether it's a fresh new life or encouragement, whatever it is that each person needs, Lord, bring it to them in abundance now, I pray, Lord. Lord, the days are getting darker and darker out there.

Our land that was once at least outwardly moral has become just a cesspool of depravity. It's getting darker, Lord. It's getting harder to live for you.

We must have a deep connection with your Spirit.

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

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/steve-gallagher/the-need-for-a-cleansed-heart/>

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