

Set a Mark Upon the Foreheads

by Timothy Williams

The sermon emphasizes the importance of grieving over sin and sharing God's grief in order to bring revival and repentance.

Scripture: 1 Samuel 13:13-14, Psalm 119:169, Psalm 119:176, Ezekiel 9:4

Topics: "Righteous Living", "Repentance"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of having a love for righteousness and a grief over sin. He refers to the story in Ezekiel chapter 9 where the Lord instructs a heavenly messenger to mark the foreheads of those who sigh and cry over the abominations in the city of Jerusalem. The preacher encourages the audience to examine their own hearts and ask if they have enough love for righteousness and grief over sin for the Lord to stir their hearts. The sermon also mentions the historical context of the Babylonian invasion of Jerusalem and the warning messages from anointed prophets.

Transcript

Set a mark upon the foreheads. Set a mark upon the foreheads, and we will see what that means to us this morning. Go with me to Ezekiel chapter 9. We're going to look at one verse, verse 4. And the Lord said unto him, go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof.

Let me just give you the background of our text here, Ezekiel chapter 9. The background is simply this. In 605 BC, King Nebuchadnezzar and his army, he's the king of Babylon, they invade the city of Jerusalem and they deport and take into exile many of the Jewish people. God had raised up the Babylonians as his instrument of judgment because their hearts had turned from the Lord and had turned to idols and their worshiping idols and pagan gods.

And you really see a rebelliousness that set in their hearts toward the Lord and toward his word. The Lord was very merciful in raising up anointed voices, anointed prophets to warn them about the judgment of God, but also to reveal to them the incredible mercy of God. That if they would just turn their hearts back to the Lord and serve only him and walk with only him, that the Lord would have mercy upon them and there would be a great time of restoration with the heart of the Lord.

But they hardened their heart to these anointed messages from this anointed word of God and they persisted in their rebellion. So the Lord raised up the Babylonians to come and to invade the land of Israel

and the city of Jerusalem and to take many into exile. And though we see in the story, we see in this time in history that the people of the God was devastated by this invasion and deportation.

King Nebuchadnezzar left in the land of Israel, he left the city of Jerusalem standing and he left people in Jerusalem, mainly the poor, the old, the feeble. He left the city standing and he left the people here. And in Ezekiel chapter 8, the Lord takes Ezekiel in a vision back to Jerusalem and he shows Ezekiel what is taking place and the people that are left in Jerusalem.

He shows them that the priests are still corrupt and they're placing idols in the temple of the Lord and he shows them that the elders of Israel are worshipping in the secret chambers of the temple, worshipping images and abominable beasts, the Bible says. He shows Ezekiel that the people are weeping and grieving over pagan gods and they're still worshipping pagan forces. And the Lord ultimately shows Ezekiel that his heart is broken over the idolatry and the persistent rebellion that's in the hearts of the people.

Not taking the scourge of the Lord, not taking the correction of the Lord and his heart is grieved. And in chapter 9, he tells Ezekiel that his glory has left the temple and ultimately because of these things, one more time he's going to bring the Babylonians back and this time they're going to level Jerusalem. They're going to burn everything to the ground, the temple is going to be leveled and the people are going to be slain with the sword.

And then in this vision, after the Lord reveals this to Ezekiel, in this vision, Ezekiel sees a man who's dressed in fine linen. He's a heavenly messenger of the Lord and by his side is an ink horn. And the Lord tells this heavenly being to place a mark upon the heads of those who are set apart from the corruption that is in this society, set apart from the the idolatry that's in the house of the Lord.

And ultimately this heavenly being is a minister of mercy. And this is what I want to look at this morning. The message isn't so much about the idolatry that's in the hearts of the people.

It's not so much about the judgment that the Lord brings. It's about what we see in the hearts of these saints of the Lord, these precious saints of the Lord that truly have set themselves apart from the corruption of the society. There's something that we see in their hearts and this is what I really feel in my spirit from the Lord that we need to look at today.

So I want you to look with me again at verse four, Ezekiel chapter nine, verse four. And the Lord said unto him, this heavenly messenger with the ink horn go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof. And it's that last part of this verse that really gripped my heart.

It says the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that is done in the midst thereof. So what we see in the hearts of these people that have separated themselves from this corrupt society is a grief over sin. They're truly grieved by the sin of the people.

They're truly grieving their heart by the corruption that has so corrupted the land of Israel, particularly the city of Jerusalem and the temple of God. And their hearts are truly grieved because they know that God's heart is broken over the sin. God's heart is broken over the corruption that is here.

And as I was looking at this and as I was meditating upon this, just a question came to my own heart. I began to search my own heart and a question came to my heart. And the question is simply this.

In my own heart, am I truly a lover of righteousness? In my own heart, do I really love righteousness and grieve over unrighteousness? Do I share the grief of God over the sin that is so corrupted the world we live in and our society we live in and so much as infiltrated the house of the Lord? Do I share the Lord's grief? Brothers and sisters, I know as Christians and as people of God, we are to walk in the joy of God. We are to walk in the peace of God. The Lord desires that his people walk in and know the joy and the peace of the Lord.

But at the same time, I believe in the hearts of those who truly love God and are set apart to the Lord. There should be a genuine love in our heart for righteousness. And there should there is a place for grief in our hearts over sin.

And what I'm talking about this morning, I'm not so much talking about this morning about our sin and the things in our lives that God's dealing with. I'm talking about the sin of our society. I'm talking about the corruption of in the world that we live in today.

Is is there truly a love in our hearts this morning for the love of righteousness? We love righteousness and we share God's grief over sin. And that's really what I'm talking about this morning. And as I was thinking about this, this question came to my heart as I was really meditating upon this and allowing the Lord to search my heart.

A question came to my heart and that question was simply this. Do I have within me enough love for righteousness and grief over sin for the Lord to be able to stir my heart when the Lord needs to stir someone to pray that he would rain down righteousness because his heart is truly grieved by the sin in the land? Can I be that person that he really stirs my heart to pray because I share his grief for sin? And I begin to think about this and think about this. I begin to think about how in the Bible there were so many people that when God wanted to bring revival, when God wanted to bring restoration to the land, when God wanted to renew his people and one more time bring them to his heart, he'd done that through a vessel that shared his heart for sin.

He'd done that through a vessel that grieved over sin, that shared his love for righteousness. And the one, the really the one person that really sticks in my mind was Ezra, was the scribe Ezra. Now I want you to go with me to the book of Ezra chapter 9. I want you to go to the book of Ezra chapter 9. And I really want us to see this, brothers and sisters, that when the Lord wanted to bring revival, when the Lord wanted to bring restoration to his people, he found the vessel that truly shared his love for righteousness and truly shared his grief over sin.

And one of our examples this morning so powerfully, powerful example in the word is Ezra. Go with me to Ezra chapter 9. Now as you have Ezra chapter 9, let me just give you the background here in this story. The Lord's people have been in Babylon, Babylonian exile for 70 years.

And by the hand of King Cyrus, king of the Medes at this time, who had conquered the Babylonians, the Lord puts it upon his heart to release God's people to one more time go back to the land of Israel, to rebuild the land of Israel. And as the people depart from their exile, when you look at it, they really have no spiritual authority. They really have no leadership.

And when they return back to the land of Israel, they fall into corruption. The corruption of the nations around them begin to take root in their heart. They begin to marry the pagan women from the lands around them and the the nations around them.

And they begin to indulge in pagan practices. And you see that the priests at this time are corrupt. And they're not teaching the word of God, the pure word of God.

They're not teaching God's heart. They're not teaching God's ways. So there's a horrible corruption that begins to set into the hearts of the people.

And after some time, Ezra himself leaves his place of exile. The Lord has put it in his heart to go back to Israel, to seek the word of the Lord at the mouth of the Lord, and to teach the people the word of God in the heart of God. So Ezra departs.

And when he gets to Jerusalem, he sees the corruption. He sees the corruption of the priests, that they're not bringing forth the pure word of the Lord and teaching the people the ways of God's heart. He sees that they've married into pagan covenants of marriage with the pagan women from the nations around them, and the pagan practices.

And his heart is really grieved at this. His heart is broken by what he sees. And I want you to look with me at verse 1. Chapter 9 verse 1 says, Now when these things were done, the princes came to me saying, The people of Israel and the priests and the Levites have not separated themselves from the people of their lands, doing according to the abominations, even of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and their Amorites.

For they have taken of their daughters from themselves and for the sons, so that the holy seed have mingled themselves with the people of those lands. Yea, the hand of the princes and the rulers have been chief in this trespass. And when I heard this thing, talking about Israel, I rent my garment and my mantle and plucked off the hair of my head and off of my beard and sat down a stone eat.

Then were assembled unto me everyone that trembled at the words of God of Israel because of the transgression of those that had been carried away. And I sat a stone eat until the evening sacrifice. So what we see here is that Ezra's heart truly grieved over the sin and the corruption, that he was truly broken over it.

And brothers and sisters, what I want us to understand is what we see here in Ezra's heart, it's not a vain show he's putting on before the people. And it's not a zealousness coming out of his own self-righteousness. He truly shares the Lord's grief.

This is a man who loves righteousness and he's grieved by the things that grieve the heart of the Lord. And what I want us to understand here, a wonderful revival is about to take place. God is about to restore his people and renew his people to his heart.

Their hearts are about to one more time be opened to hear the word of God and let God speak into their heart. But it's going to come through a vessel that truly loves righteousness and shares God's grief for sin. And I had to ask myself this question.

I had to ask myself this question. Do I have that love for righteousness that when God needs to stir somebody's heart with his grief over sin because he wants to do something powerful, because he wants to bring a revival, because he wants to open up the hearts of his people to one more time hear the word and he needs someone, someone that shares his grief over sin. Do I have enough of that in my heart? Do I have enough of that in my life? Do I possess enough of the grief of God's grief, shared God's grief over sin that God could stir my heart, that the Lord could stir my heart? That's what we see with Ezra.

He shared the grief of the Lord. And I want you to look with me. Look with me at verse five.

Verse five says, And at the evening sacrifice, I rose up from my heaviness and having rent my garment and my mantle, I fell upon my knees and I spread out my hands unto the Lord my God. So what we see here is Ezra's grief and his brokenness over the sin of the people bring him to a place of intercession. And brothers and sisters, I believe every true move of God.

I believe when the Lord truly powerfully moves and he touches people's lives, it really begins with heartfelt prayer. I believe that with all my heart, that when God wants to do something, he seeks out that people that walk so intimately with him and he can begin to share again his grief. He can begin to share again his burdens.

He can begin to lay these things upon the hearts of his people, share the grief of his heart and bring them to that place of brokenness and intercession. And it's through the prayers of his people God begins to move. It's through these heartfelt prayers of his people that God begins to move and perform the things that are upon his heart.

So this brokenness, this grief that Ezra has, it brings him to this place of intercession and God where God can move through his prayers. But there's something about Ezra's prayers that I think that we really need to see. And that's in verse six and verse seven.

Ezra's praying and he says, oh my God, I am ashamed and blushed to lift up my face to thee my God. For our iniquities are increased over our heads and our trespasses has grown up into the heavens. Since the days of our fathers have we been in great trespass into this day.

And for our iniquities have we, our kings and our priests, been delivered into the hands of the kings of the lands. To the sword and to the captivity and to a spoil and to confusion of face as it was this day. So in his prayers Ezra says, for our iniquities are increased.

In other words, he puts himself in this number. He says, our iniquities are increased and our trespasses has grown up into the heavens. In other words, what I want us to see this morning is there is absolutely no self-righteousness in this man's heart.

This man truly loves God and he truly loves God's people. And we don't hear any scornful words against the people of God. We don't hear any accusations against the people of God.

He truly loves the Lord and he loves God's people. And when Ezra, I really believe at the heart of this prayer, when Ezra says, he says, for our iniquities are increased over our head and our trespasses grown up into the heavens. Ezra is not saying that I am partaking in the sins of the people.

Ezra is not saying that I am doing the things that the people are doing, but at the heart of his prayer is this. Ezra is saying, God, I cannot put myself above these people because if you were to mark transgressions, who would stand in your side? God, I am walking right. I am walking holy.

God, I am set apart to you. My heart is truly given to you. But Lord, I understand it's only because of the grace of God in my life.

You see such a humility in this man's heart and it's coming out of his love for God and out of his and his love for the Lord's people. And he understands he is what he is only by the grace of God. And my point is

simply this brothers and sisters as Christians, how can we not have mercy upon other people, have mercy upon others when we truly see the mercy of God in our own life? Yes, our hearts do grieve over sin.

And yes, at times arises up a holy indignation, a righteous indignation against sin that God stirs within our life. But yet at the same time, we truly understand if I have any love for righteousness and if I have any grief over sin, it's only because the grace of God has worked it into my heart and into my life. I want us to see his humility here, because this is to me, this is the whole key to what happens next.

This is the whole key to this revival. The humility that is in this man's life. I want you to look with me at chapter 10, verse 1 and 2. The remainder of the chapter is Ezra praying.

Look with me at chapter 10, verse 1 and 2. Verse 1 says, Now when Ezra had prayed, and when he had confessed, weeping and casting himself down before the house of God, there assembled unto him out of Israel a very great congregation of men and women and children. For the people wept very sore. And the son of Jehu, one of the sons of Elam, answered and said unto Ezra, We have trespassed against our God and have taken strange wives out of the people of the land.

Yet now there is hope in Israel concerning this thing. So what we see here in the scriptures, when you really look at it, what we clearly see in the scriptures is that these are a people that are broken by Ezra's humility of heart. You see, it was Ezra's humility that the people, it was through his humility that the people could feel God's grief over their sin.

It was through Ezra's humility and grief of heart, his own grief of heart over their sin, that the people could truly feel how much their sin had broken the heart of God. And in this story, what we see is that through Ezra's humility and his brokenness of heart, there comes such a spirit of repentance upon the lives of these people. There comes such a spirit of brokenness and a remorse upon the lives of these people.

And to me, brothers and sisters, this is the awesome power that brings brokenness and repentance upon the lives of people. It is God's grief pouring out of a humble vessel. I think what brings revival, I think what really brings revival is when people can feel the grief that God has for their sin out of people that are humble and broken before the Lord.

I think that's the power that brings revival. When God's grief can flow, when his grief over sin can flow over somebody that's been broken by the Lord, and there's a work of humility that's been in their heart, that's the power that brings revival. But with this brokenness and grief over sin, an incredible hope comes alive in these people's hearts.

And what I'm saying is this is the same humility of God's people that allows God's grief to express itself over sin and brings brokenness and repentance. It also reveals the great mercy of God. It brings such a hope in people's hearts.

God is broken and he's grieved over my sin and he longs to forgive me because he loves me. He longs to forgive me because his heart is towards me. He longs to forgive me because he desires that union and that intimacy and that communion with me.

It's not just a grief, it's not just a humility in our hearts, it's not just that work of humility in our heart that God can bring, express his grief and bring people to a place of repentance, but that same humility births a hope in the people's heart and lives that God loves me and God has a plan and a hope and a future for my life. So let me sum up everything that I've just said. When the Lord needed someone that shared his grief

over sin in order to bring repentance and deliverance to a sinful nation, he found that grief in his servant Ezra.

And at looking at this, we have to ask ourselves this question, do I have within me enough love for righteousness and grief over sin for the Lord to be able to stir my heart? When the Lord needs to stir someone to pray that he would rain down righteousness because his heart is so grieved by sin in the land, can I be that person that he can stir? Do I truly love righteousness and share his grief for sin over sin? Now talking about the Lord's grief, and I want to get to the cross in a minute and the power of the cross in a minute, but talking about sharing the Lord's grief for sin, I want to show you what is not his grief over sin. I want you to go with me to the first Samuel chapter 13. First Samuel chapter 13.

Look with me at verse 13 and 14. Verse 13 says, and Samuel said to Saul, thou has done foolishly. Thou has not kept the commandment of the Lord thy God, which he commanded thee.

For now would the Lord have established thy kingdom of Israel forever. But now thy kingdom shall not continue. The Lord has sought him a man after his own heart and the Lord has commanded him to be a captain over his people because thou has not kept that which the Lord had commanded thee.

Now I want you to go with me to chapter 14. Look with me at verse 27, then we're going to go to verse 43. It says, but Jonathan heard not when his father charged the people with the oath.

Wherefore, he put forth the end of the rod that was in his hand and dipped it in a honeycomb and put his hand to his mouth and his eyes were enlightened. Go with me to verse 43. Then Saul said to Jonathan, tell me what thou has done.

And Jonathan said, told him and said, I did, but taste a little honey with the end of my rod that was in my hand and lo, I must die. And Saul answered, God do so and more also for thou shall surely die, Jonathan. And the people said unto Saul, shall Jonathan die who had wrought this great salvation in Israel? God forbid as the Lord lived with, there shall not one hair of his head fall to the ground for he had wrought with God this day.

So the people rescued Jonathan. Brothers and sisters, my point in comparing these two stories is this. Saul was so ready to condemn a man for what he thought was sin and disobedience, but yet he was so blind to the sin in his own life.

He was so blind to the rebellion that was in his own heart. He was so ready to condemn a man that was righteous. He was so ready to rise up in his holy zeal and indignation and a man that was really righteous.

And yet he was so blind by the sin that was in his own heart. This is not the grief of God. This is not God's grief over sin.

See, this is what I call an unholy. This is what I call an unholy grief for sin. And the reason why I called it an unholy grief for sin is because it's so quick to point out the sin and disobedience in other people's lives.

But yet it's a heart that is really close to the word of the Lord. It's a heart that's really close and doesn't allow the word of God to penetrate its own heart. And that's so that's not the grief we're talking about.

The grief over sin we're talking about is not this religious zeal that rises up when I see somebody doing something I know that grieves God's heart, but yet my heart is not open to let God deal with my own heart.

That is not the grief of the Lord. It's so easy to rise up and look at what other people are doing and look at their disobedience and their rebellion.

It's so easy to see that in people's lives where they don't measure up. And so many people do that, but yet their own heart is not open to the dealings of the Lord. That is not the grief that we're talking about.

The grief that we're talking about comes out of a heart of a lover of truth who has opened their heart to the Lord and their heart is so open to the truth to come in even to reprove the heart. And because they have that kind of heart open for truth, God can come in and do this work and they share God's grief over sin. Now here's what I want to end with this morning.

I want to end with sharing with you the wonderfulness of God. One more time, I feel by the Lord to take us back to the power of the cross. We said in order to see God move powerfully in our land and in people's lives, there are times the Lord needs a people that truly share his love for righteousness and truly grieves over sin.

But where does this love for righteousness and grief over sin come from? How does it work into my heart? How does it work into my heart? I want to show you this. Go with me right back to Ezekiel chapter 9. Ezekiel chapter 9. Look with me at verse 4 again. And the Lord said unto him, go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof.

So the Lord says to this heavenly messenger, this messenger of mercy, he says, take your inkhorn and all those that truly share my grief over sin, they see the sin and the corruption in the land and their heart is truly stirred and grieving over the sin and the corruption in the land. I want you to set a mark upon their head. But brothers and sisters, what I want you to understand about this mark is it isn't just a mark.

It's something very specific, something very detailed. See this word mark in the Hebrew here. This word mark, when you look it up in the Hebrew, it's actually the very last letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

It's the letter Tau, pronounced T-A-U. That's the mark the Lord is saying to place upon their head. See, what the Lord is literally saying to this messenger is right upon the heads of those that grieve over sin, the last letter in the Hebrew alphabet, Tau.

When you study it out in the Hebrew, that's what the Lord is saying. It's a very specific mark. It's the very last letter in the Hebrew alphabet.

And brothers and sisters, when you study this out, what you see is that this letter, it has a very strong meaning. It so strongly implies the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. Well, how do you get that? How do you get that? Well, let me just explain to you how I get that.

Jewish people then and today would tell you that because it is the last letter in the Hebrew alphabet, it represents completion. It represents a finished work. Jewish people today, if you were to talk to them about this, they would tell you, yes, this letter Tau, to us, it represents completion.

It represents a finished work. And my question is, where did Jesus finish the work of redemption for the salvation of men's souls once and for all? He finished it upon the cross. On the cross, Jesus was on the cross and he cried out, it is finished.

In other words, he said, it's complete. Everything that needed to be done for man's salvation and for man's redemption was completed. There's nothing else to do.

It's finished on the cross. Brothers and sisters, what am I saying? When I look at this, when I look at what the Lord was saying, place this letter upon the heads of the people. It really, one more time, the Lord in the forefront of God's mind is the cross.

He's thinking about the cross. And this is my point, brothers and sisters. It's the power of the cross that produces within us this love for righteousness and this grief over sin.

It's not something that we can do in our own strength. It's not something that we can work up in our own power. It's by the power of the cross that working in our lives that produces this grief over sin and this love for righteousness in our lives.

The power of the cross. See, brothers and sisters, I found out something in my walk with God. Every work God begins in our life or every work that God does in our life, the beginning point is always the power of the cross.

It's always the cross. See, by the cross of the Lord Jesus, the blood came and it cleansed us and it washed our sins away. And then in this clean vessel, the Lord pours in his spirit and the spirit of God is the one who begins to work in our hearts.

He's the one that begins to conform us into the nature of Christ. He's the one that begins to take God's heart and work God's heart in us. It begins with the power of the cross.

Whatever God is working into our hearts, whether it be love, whether it be humility, whether it be godly integrity, whether it be a love for righteousness and a grief over sin, it begins with the power of the cross. In the book of Psalm chapter 119, when you look at the book of Psalm chapter 119, you see it's actually divided by the Hebrew alphabet. The whole Psalm is divided by the Hebrew alphabet.

And I just want to look at this. Go with me to Psalm 119. And I want to look at you, look with you at the cry that you see in Psalm 119 under this Hebrew letter Ta, the very last letter in the Hebrew alphabet.

There's a cry that you see here, and it so represents the cry of the cross. Look with me at Psalm 119, verse 169. David says, if you look above it, you see the Hebrew letter Ta.

He says in Psalm 169, he says, let my cry come near before thee, O Lord. Give me understanding according to thy word. Let my supplication come before thee, deliver me according to thy word.

My lips shall utter praise thee when thou has taught me thy statutes. My tongue shall speak of thy word for all thy commandments or righteousness. Let thine hand help me for I have chosen thy precepts.

I have longed for thy salvation, O Lord, and thy law is my delight. Let my soul live and it shall praise thee, and let my judgments help me. I have gone astray like a lost sheep.

Seek thy servant for I do not forget thy commandments. Brothers and sisters, there's so many things that we can bring out of the scripture that comes out of the cross, but I believe you can sum this whole section up really in the first two verses. So again, let's just read the first two verses.

He says, let my cry come near before thee, O Lord. Give me understanding according to thy word. Let my supplication come before thee, deliver me according to thy word.

So in these two verses, what the psalmist is saying is this, this is what he's saying. He's saying, let the cry of my heart come before you, that my prayers would reach right into the very presence of God without any hindrances. God, the desire of my heart is that my prayers would reach your heart, that nothing would hinder or obstruct my prayers from reaching your heart.

And beloved, this is the power of the cross. The power of the cross removed every hindrances that would obstruct the cries of our heart from reaching the heart of the Lord. The power of the cross removed condemnation.

The power of the cross removed all the accusations of the enemy, all the rightful accusations of the enemy. When he points to the things in our lives before the throne of God and he points them out and says, Lord, here's something and here's something. The power of the cross removed all the lies of the enemy that would try to separate us from God.

Brothers and sisters, this is the power of the cross. The power of the cross has removed everything that would keep our hearts and keep our cries from coming before the presence of the Lord. That's the power of the cross.

And according to David, what was the prayer that he so desperately wanted God to hear? Look with me at verse 170. He says, let my supplication come before thee. Deliver me according to thy word.

In other words, the prayer that he so desperately wanted the Lord to hear is that the Lord would deliver him by the power of his word. And I believe this is the cry of every believer that sincerely loves God. I believe this is the cry of every saint that has truly been washed in the blood in their heart is toward the Lord.

The cry of their heart is simply this, that God's word would work in their hearts and deliver them, that God's word would work in their hearts and change them, that God's word would work in their heart and transform them. And because of the precious blood of Jesus Christ, this is the prayer God will hear every time. Every time there's a cry that goes up from your heart and says, Lord, I want to be a little bit more like Jesus.

God, I need more of your deliverance worked in my heart. I need you to change me more. I need you to transform me more because of the precious blood of Jesus Christ that has removed every hindrance.

This is a prayer God will hear every time and it's precious to him. And brother says, I want to encourage you this morning. I want to encourage you this morning that if your heart is truly given to the Lord, the miracle working power of the cross is working in your life.

If our hearts are truly given to the Lord, the spirit of God is doing a good work in our heart. If our hearts are truly given to the Lord by the power of the cross and that cry is going up to the Lord, it says, God, I want to be more like Jesus. I need more of your heart.

I need more of your nature. God, here's an area of my life. I yield to you.

Here's an issue in my heart. I yield to you. God work in my heart.

That is a cry. He will hear an answer every time the power of the cross is working within the lives of his people. What am I saying? This love for righteousness and this grief over sin that God uses in the hearts of his people to bring revival and restoration to bring them to that place of brokenness and intercession with a humility.

It's not something that you do in your own strength. It's not something that you work in your own power. It's not by might nor by power, but only by the spirit of the Lord.

It's the power of the cross working in our hearts. Brothers and sisters, let me just share with you my altar call before we actually stand and rise for the altar call. There's a verse in Galatians and what's going to have you turn there.

I'm not. I'm just going to quote it to you. It says the spirit wars against the flesh and the flesh wars against the spirit.

Brothers and sisters, every believer has to deal with their flesh. Every listen, every believer has to deal with their flesh. And sometimes we can get so discouraged by the battle with our flesh that we could say, Lord, Lord, I have these these fleshly appetites that rise up.

God, I battle with fleshly temptations. And sometimes I just do not feel like I grieve over sin. God, I see the things that rise up in my flesh.

I see the things I have to nail to the cross. I see the temptations in my heart. And father, I just do not believe I am in the same category with this man named Ezra.

That was the cry of my heart. I know the things in my flesh that I struggle with. I know that.

And sometimes it'd be so easy to say, God, I don't grieve over sin like I should because I struggle with things. But the Lord really encouraged my heart. He said, Tim, do you love me? I love you.

Is your heart given to me? God, all my heart is given to you. Lord, I embrace your will for my life. There's no other passion.

In my heart that takes the throne of my heart, but you and the Lord said, Tim, one more time, I want to tell you this. You need to rest in this truth. The power of the cross is at work in your heart.

You need to rest in the power of the cross. If you really love me and your heart is given to me, I am producing in you such a love for righteousness. And I am producing a grief in your heart for sin.

And at the same time, Tim, I am working a humility in, in your life, a meekness in your life that when I want to bring revival, I can stir that grief in your heart over sin like Ezra and people will feel my grief over their sin. And they'll feel my heart broken heart over their sin. And there'll be such a spirit of repentance because of the work that the power of the cross is doing in your life.

And ultimately the Lord was saying, Tim, be encouraged, rest. Your heart is toward me. The cross is working powerfully in your heart, doing this work one more time, brothers and sisters.

It was an altar call for me just to come back to the faithfulness of God, to work in my heart. The power of the cross is working in my heart. I want you to stand with me this morning.

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