

# God's Demands

by Chuck Smith

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*God requires us to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God, but we can fulfill these requirements by believing on him whom he has sent, which is Jesus Christ, and allowing God's spirit to transform us.*

**Duration:** 37:15

**Scripture:** Deuteronomy 10:12, Psalm 25:4, Psalm 51:1-2, Psalm 51:5-7, Micah 6:8

**Topics:** "Gods Way"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the transformative power of God's spirit working within believers. He highlights that through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, God enables believers to obey His ideal requirements and fulfill His purposes. The speaker then shares a story about an old violin that was initially undervalued but became valuable after being touched by a master's hand, drawing a parallel to how God can transform and restore broken lives. The sermon concludes with the reminder that it is important for individuals to examine the path they are on and consider where it will lead them, emphasizing the need to seek God's ways and follow His paths.

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## Transcript

Let's turn in our Bibles now to Psalm 51 for our scripture reading today. I'll read the first in the unnumbered verses. Pastor Brian will lead the congregation in reading the even-numbered verses, and shall we stand as we read the Word of God? Have mercy upon me, O God, according to your lovingkindness, according to the multitude of your tender mercies.

Blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.

Against thee, the only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight, that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest. Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me. Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden parts thou shalt make me to know wisdom.

Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean. Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me to hear joy and gladness, that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice.

Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take your Holy Spirit from me.

Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free spirit. And then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners shall be converted to you. Deliver me from blood guiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation, and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness.

O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth shall show forth your praise. For thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it. Thou delightest not in burnt offerings.

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart. These, O God, you will not despise. Do good, and thy good pleasure unto Zion.

Build thou the walls of Jerusalem. And then you shall be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with the burnt offering, and the whole burnt offering. And then they shall offer bulls on your altar.

Let's pray. Father, as David was conscious of his sin and called upon your mercies, so Lord, conscious of our sin and our guilt, we call upon you, Lord, for your mercies, for that work of your Spirit, Lord, in our hearts and in our lives, restoring again that wonderful fellowship that is ours for the asking. Lord, we ask your blessing upon the study of your word today.

Open now our hearts, Lord, to the understanding and the receiving of your truth. In Jesus name we pray, amen. You may be seated.

This morning we'd like to draw your attention to the sixth chapter of Micah, verse eight. Here Micah declares, He has shown you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God? The prophet asked the question, what does God require of you? That's something that we should all be interested in.

What does God require of me? The same question was also asked in the book of Deuteronomy, chapter 10, verse 12. Now Israel, what does the Lord your God require of thee but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all of his ways, and to love him and to serve the Lord your God with all of your heart, with all of your soul? The interesting thing in these two texts is the word require, because in the Hebrew there are two different Hebrew words that are, both of them translated require. Here in Micah, the word in the Hebrew is dorash, which is a word that means demand.

What does the Lord demand of you? In Deuteronomy, the Hebrew word is sha'al, and sha'al is request. What does the Lord request or ask or request of you? So quite a difference between what God asks or requests of me and what God does demand from me. What does God request? Well, he requests that you fear and reverence him.

There are so many people today who do lack the fear of God in their lives, and it's evidenced by the way they live. If they really had a true fear of God, a reverence for God, they could not live as they do, because the scripture says the fear of the Lord is to hate evil. And unfortunately, in many of the pulpits across our land, in many of the TV evangelists, there is not a true fear of God manifested by the fact that they live such high lifestyles.

If they really had the fear of the Lord, they could not be living in the extravagances that and the excesses in which they live. The Bible tells us that we're not to serve the Lord for filthy lucre's sake. Paul or Peter

writing to the church said, feed the flock of God, which is among you, taking the oversight, not by constraint, but willingly and not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind.

Notice he said, feed the flock of God. He didn't say fleece the flock of God, which so many are guilty of doing. People often ask when they hear of activities by certain prominent ministers, how in the world could they do that? And my answer is always, because they don't have the fear of God in their hearts.

To fear God is to hate evil. Secondly, the Lord requests or asks that you walk in all of his ways. Now God desires us to walk in his ways because he knows that when we walk in our own way, we can get into all kinds of difficulty and all kinds of trouble.

And so it's for your own good that God requests that you walk in his ways. The Lord said the way of the transgressor is hard and God would keep you from the suffering and the pain that so often accompanies when a person decides to go his own way rather than walking in the way of the Lord. He knows the heartbreak that you can experience when you go in your own way.

And he knows the joy and the peace and the contentment that one experiences when he is walking in the ways of the Lord. David wrote in Psalm 25, show me thy ways, O Lord, teach me thy paths. Through Jeremiah, the Lord said to the people, now just stand still for a moment and more or less take an inventory.

Look at the path that you are on to continue on that path. Where will it lead you? If you continue the path of life that you're, where will it lead you? Where will you end up when you get to the end of that path? And then the Lord said, ask for the old path, which is the good path and walk therein and you will find rest for your soul, the peace of doing what God would have you to do. Then the Lord requests that you love him and serve him with all of your heart and soul.

In Deuteronomy chapter 6, it declares, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all of your heart, all of your soul, and with all of your might. That is, you're to love God supremely. His love is to be the first love of your life.

There should be no other love that exceeds your love for God. Everything else should be subservient to your love for God. When Jesus was questioned by a lawyer, what is the greatest commandment? He quoted Deuteronomy 6, 5. And he said to them, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind.

And then Jesus said, and the second is like the first. You're to love your neighbor as yourself. And if you will keep these two commandments, these two commandments embrace, encompass all of the law and all of the commandments and all of the prophets, all summed up in loving God supremely, loving one another as you love yourself.

Paul wrote, if you love one another, you have fulfilled the law for love is the fulfilling of the law. This is what God asked or request of you. But what does, does God demand of you here in Micah? He tells us that God demands that we do justly.

That is to always do what is fair and what is right. Now I agree with that. I do believe that a person should always do what is fair and what is right.

But I have to confess, though I agree with it. I don't always do it. Sometimes I do things that I know are not right, but I do them anyhow.

And when I tell you that I am confessing to you that I have sinned, that I am a sinner and I'm in the same boat that you're in because the Bible said we have all sinned and come short of the glory of God. Not to do what God demands me to do is sin. So the confession, I'm a sinner.

But secondly, the Lord said, love mercy. Now I do love mercy when it is shown to me. I'm not always so anxious to show mercy to others.

I am prone to want to get even. I am prone to rejoice when some evil happens to a person who has done wrong to me. But God tells me I am to love mercy.

But when I've been wronged, I find that I love revenge. I love to get even. Several years ago, the story was going around about this woman who was to meet her friend at a coffee shop.

And so as she was driving down the street, a cat ran out in front of her car and she squashed it. And not wanting to leave that cat lying in the street, the remains of it, she had a grocery bag in the back of her station wagon. So she scooped the cat and put it in the grocery bag and left the window down in the back so it wouldn't get smelly and continued to the coffee shop where she met her friend, told her of her experience of running over the cat.

They looked out the window and they saw this lady standing at the back of the car looking at that shopping bag and looking around and not seeing anybody. She reached in and grabbed the shopping bag and walked casually off. And the lady walked into the coffee shop and sat down, ordered a cup of coffee.

And as she was drinking her coffee, she peeked into the bag to see what was there. And seeing the mangled cat, she fainted. They called 911.

The paramedics came and they put her on the gurney, wheeling her out to the ambulance. One of the firemen picked up the shopping bag and set it on the gurney next to her. Why do I like that story? Because I like that story.

It shows that I really don't love mercy. I love getting even. I like it when an evil deed is rewarded that way.

But yet, Jesus said, blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. In other words, he is saying that in order to obtain mercy, I need to be merciful. He also said that I will be judged by the same standard that I use in judging others.

And that is why I seek to be very lenient in judging another person, because I do want leniency when I am judged. The third thing that God does demand is that we walk humbly with our God. There are so many proud and arrogant people in this world in which we live today.

And it is interesting that a proud look is at the top of the list of the seven things that God hates in Proverbs 6. In Proverbs 16, the Lord tells us, everyone who is proud in heart is an abomination unto the Lord. Both James and Peter wrote, God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Jesus said, he that humbles himself shall be exalted.

James wrote, if you humble yourself in the sight of the Lord, he will lift you up. Paul wrote, in lowliness of mind, let each one esteem others better than themselves. If you see a man who is proud and arrogant,

you can put it down that that man doesn't know God and has not had a real encounter with God.

Because if a man has a true encounter with God, he can no longer be proud. It is a very self-abasing experience to have a true encounter with God. Look at Daniel, that prince of a man.

But Daniel had an encounter. He had a vision of Jesus. He speaks about it in chapter 10.

He said, in the 24th day of the first month, as I was by the side of the great river Ithaca, when I looked up, I saw a certain man clothed in linen, who was girded with the fine gold of Euphrates, and his body also was like burl. His face appeared like lightning, his eyes like lamps of fire, his arms and his feet were in color like polished brass, and the voice of his words were like the voice of a multitude. And I, Daniel, was the only one who saw the vision, for the men that were with me did not see the vision, but they were trembling so hard they tried to hide themselves, and therefore I was left alone.

And I saw this great vision, and there remained no strength in me, for my beauty was turned into ugliness, and I retained no strength. Encounter with the Lord, the result, his beauty, he said, turned into ugliness. Isaiah tells us that in the year that King Uzziah died, he saw the Lord high and lifted up, his glory filled the temple.

Then he said, woe is me, for I am undone. I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips. Seeing God, he saw himself in the light of God.

Woe is me, I'm a man of unclean lips. When Peter had his experience very early in his relationship with the Lord, Jesus was teaching the people as he was sitting in Peter's little boat. And after he had finished his lesson, he said to Peter, now launch out into the deep and let down your nets for an abundant catch.

And Simon answered him and said, oh master, we have fished all night and we've taken nothing in. Nevertheless, at your word, I will let down the net. And now, when they had done this, they enclosed a great multitude of fish, their nets began to break.

And so they beckoned to their partners, which were on the other ship, to come in to help them. And they came and they filled both ships so full, they began to sink. Now when Peter saw it, he fell on at Jesus' knees, crying, depart from me, for I am a sinful man.

Seeing the Lord, seeing ourselves in the light of the Lord, dispels any pride that we might have in ourselves. The problem is that we see ourselves in the light of each other. And if we compare ourselves with others, we don't look too bad.

We sort of fit average in the crowd. But others are not the standard of comparison. It's seeing yourself in the light of Jesus, and that is seeing then the truth, the ugly truth about yourself, and pride melts.

Now, looking at what the Lord demands of me, I must confess that I've come short. I have sinned. I haven't met the Lord's demands.

I'm a sinner. And don't feel so smug and self-righteous, because you're a sinner too. And the Bible says that we've all sinned.

We've all come short. I'm sure that none of you would like to come up here to the pulpit this morning and stand here where I am standing and look over the congregation and declare to them, I've always done what the Lord has requested and demanded of me. I am perfect.

I have never sinned. If you would come up and make that declaration, you would immediately elicit the sympathy of everybody that is here, because they would know that you are mentally deranged. We've all sinned.

We've all come short. We haven't been able to do what God requires of us to do. What is request? What is demands? We haven't been able to fulfill them.

So when we come to the New Testament, we find that God has made a new requirement for us. Having failed to keep the requirements, having been condemned by the law, coming to the New Testament, I find that one day they came to Jesus and they asked Jesus, what must, what work must we do to do the work of God? And Jesus answered, this is the work of God, or this is what God requires, that you believe on him whom he has sent. Whoa, I can do that.

Though I haven't been able to fulfill the requirements that God gave to Micah, to do justly, to love mercy, to walk humbly with my God, I find this is within my grasp. For believing is a choice. And I can choose to believe that Jesus is sent by God into this world to take upon himself my sin, to die in my place.

I can believe that. And that's what God requires of me. That is the work that I must do to do the work of God.

So I find that the ideal requirements are listed there in the Old Testament. But for me today, the actual requirement is that I just believe that Jesus bore my sins for me, my weaknesses, my failings, he was sent by God to do that. You say, but wait a minute.

Is that all? Well, it's not all, but it's surely where it starts. It starts by believing in Jesus Christ. But then once you believe in him, there is a tremendous transformation that takes place in your life.

The Bible tells us that if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature. The old things are passed away and everything becomes new. By believing in Jesus Christ, you have a spiritual birth.

When Nicodemus said to Jesus, how can I be born again when I'm old? Jesus answered, for God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever would believe in him would not perish, but have everlasting life. That was his answer to the question. How can I be born again? Jesus said, by believing in me.

Prior to believing in Jesus Christ, at best, you are not a whole person. You are only two thirds of a person. You are body, you are soul, but the spirit is dead.

But when you come to believe in Jesus Christ, you have a spiritual birth. Jesus called it being born again, born of the spirit. And suddenly things that were once a mystery to you, things that you just could not understand, all of a sudden become very clear.

The Bible says that the natural man doesn't understand the things of the spirit, neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual understands all things. And so when you're born of the spirit, suddenly the Bible comes alive.

Suddenly you read it and it makes real sense to you. Suddenly your relationship with God is established because God is the spirit and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth, Jesus tells us. Now, when Jesus then comes into my life and begins to dwell in me, and that day he said, you will know

that I'm in the father and you are in me and I am in you.

And when Jesus begins to dwell within you, through the power of his spirit, he begins to transform your life. So that through the power of God's spirit, I am enabled to then keep the requirements of God in the old testament. You see, God has not given up on the ideal.

It is true that God loves you as you are, but he loves you so much he won't leave you as you are. He will begin that change in you and you'll find that you'll begin to do justly. You'll begin to love mercy and knowing that it's not you.

It's not something that you've done of yourself or could do of yourself, but it is God working in you, making the changes within you. There can be no pride, but you'll walk humbly with your God as you watch what God is doing in your life, amazed at what God is doing, amazed at the changes that are taking place. And so many of them even unconscious changes that you don't even notice for a while.

We have one fellow who was a retired Navy man, picked up the typical Navy language. He accepted Christ and he was just enthused in his walk with the Lord. And a couple of months into his walk with the Lord, he was out in the backyard mowing his lawn and singing worship praise songs to the Lord that he had learned here at Calvary.

And he was so involved in praising the Lord and just there following his mower that he didn't notice this low branch and it caught him right in the forehead and knocked him over backwards. And he lay there on the ground for a moment and he jumped up and went over and retrieved the mower and turned it off, went running into the house and his wife said, honey, what happened? What's that big lump across your forehead? And he said, Oh, sweetheart, the greatest thing happened to me. She said, what do you mean? He said, when I got knocked over, he said, I didn't curse.

She said, honey, I haven't heard you curse for two months. He said, really? The glorious changes that are wrought and you realize this is not me. This is the work of God's spirit working in me, transforming me, making me into the image of Jesus Christ.

And thus the purposes of God are now being fulfilled through his dwelling within me. And so God has not given up on the ideal requirements, but now he gives me the capacity to obey those ideal requirements, the transformation of the life that comes to Jesus. It was battered and scarred and the auctioneer thought it scarcely worth his while to spend much time with the old violin, but he held it up with a smile.

What am I bid? Good folks. He cried. He'll start the bidding for me.

A dollar, a dollar. Now two, only two, two dollars. He'll make it three, three dollars once, three dollars twice and going for three.

But no, from the room far back, a gray haired man came forward and picked up the bow and wiping the dust from the old violin and tightening the loosened strings. He played a melody, pure and sweet as the caroling angel sings. The music ceased in the auctioneer with a voice that was quiet and low.

He said, what am I bid for this old violin? And he held it up with a bow. A thousand dollars. He'll make it two, two thousand.

He'll make it three, three thousand once, three thousand twice and going and gone, said he. The people cheered, but some of them cried. We really don't quite understand what changed its worth.

Swift came the reply, the touch of the master's hand. And many a man with life out of tune and battered and scarred with sin is auctioned cheap to the thoughtless crowd, much like that old violin. A mess of potage, a glass of wine, a game, and he travels on.

He's going once, he's going twice, he's going and is almost gone. But the master comes and the foolish crowd never quite understands the worth of the soul and the change that is wrought by the touch of the master's hand. Oh, how wonderful when our lives are touched by the power of God and we are changed, we are transformed.

The spirit comes alive and I become what God would have me to be through his spirit working in me. God wants to work in our lives today, in your life today to enable you to do what he requires, to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God. Father, we thank you for the help that we get through the indwelling of your Holy Spirit.

And Father, today we pray that our lives might reflect our Lord Jesus Christ as we are conformed by the spirit working in us into his image. Make us like you, Lord. In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen. Amen. Shall we stand? It is possible that you have not been born of the Spirit.

It is possible that you are struggling. You want to be fair, but you find it hard. You'd like to be merciful, but you're unable.

You need the help of the Lord. You need the transforming power of God's Spirit. And God wants to work in your life today.

If you'll just give him the chance. The actual requirement of God for you is just to believe on Jesus Christ. The rest will follow.

But it starts with believing in him. And the pastors are down here at the front to pray for you, that you might get started on this new path, walking with the Lord, experiencing the touch of God's Spirit upon your life, and that transforming power of God's Spirit. So I would encourage you, when we're dismissed, make your way forward.

And these men will be here waiting for you, to pray for you, that you might know that new life, that life of the Spirit that is available for you through your surrendering to Jesus Christ. May the Lord be with you as we move into this hectic Christmas season. May the peace of Christ just establish your mind, your heart.

May he help you to keep from being caught up with the fervor in the world over material things. But may you have that comfort and peace of the Holy Spirit working in you and helping you as you just come into a richer relationship with our Lord. May the Lord watch over and keep you now in Jesus' love, in his name.

His countenance upon thee and give thee peace.

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