

In Times Like These... - Part 9

by Erlo Stegen

In this sermon, Erlo Stegen emphasizes the importance of discernment, the impact of sin on our relationship with God, and the necessity of unity and love among believers.

Scripture: 1 Chronicles 12:32, Matthew 6:14-15, Matthew 18:21-22, John 14:15, John 14:26

Topics: "Discernment"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of watching and praying as a way to stay faithful to God. He warns against the dangers of not discerning the times and not being in tune with God. The preacher refers to a statistic that states that a majority of missionaries struggle to get along with each other, highlighting the need for harmony and unity among God's people. He also discusses the consequences of sin entering a Christian's life, emphasizing the need to resist temptation and remain faithful to God's image. The sermon references passages from the Bible, including First Chronicles and Romans, to support these teachings.

Transcript

Shall we turn to the theme for this week's conference? First Chronicles Let's turn back to our word that we read these days, First Chronicles 12, verse 32. First Chronicles 12, verse 32 Of the sons of Issachar, who had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do. The first message, we had the same text.

And we spoke about God's people. We spoke about God's people who had no understanding. Who didn't know what Israel ought to do.

There was God's house. There was God's house and in one of the big rooms there, Tobiah had moved in. When they were building the walls, he was the one that was mocking and scoffing and saying just look at that, even if a fox jumps on it it will break.

But now here suddenly we find him given a room in the house of God. And the people of God didn't understand, didn't know what to say and accepted it. It was a good thing and they didn't have discernment that the devil had come right in.

No discernment. As I said in Hebrew, the word is behin. And behina.

And I think there is another word if I remember correctly, which means wall. Now behin, we find in another place as well in the Old Testament. A word that was a great blessing to us after the revival, the beginning

of the revival.

Isaiah 59 verse 2, whoever was there should know that verse of my heart. It should be indelibly engraved in every heart and mind of a child of God. That God's hand is not shortened or shortened.

His ear is not deaf. But your sins have become a separation between you and your God. That word separation is behind.

Your sins separate you from God. That word separation is behind. Discernment, knowledge.

It was a time when they had no knowledge. The people of God, how can they have knowledge and understanding and discernment if right in this temple of God you find an enemy of the gospel. There are many great churches in this world and the leaders and the top men are godless men.

They are not converted. They are living in their sin. They go against the gospel.

And the church acknowledges them. No wonder that you are so far that you want to marry homosexuals and carry on with all those things. Sodom and Gomorrah have got a place in the church.

And the people of God, they have got no understanding. Of course they won't because you get your salary every month. That was the first meaning of that word behind.

No understanding, not seeing clearly, not discerning. But there is a second meaning to that. And that's what we find in Isaiah 59 verse 2. Your sin separates you from God.

If you sin, then you separate. Separate between man and God. There is a big difference between man and God.

And then when you are separated from God, you are no longer in His image. You are not like Him anymore. And if there is a big difference between you and God, you become totally different to God.

When we sin, dear friends, we lose our godly image. We were made in the image of God. And when we are born again, we should be in the image of God.

And we should be changed more and more, becoming like Jesus. What a tragedy when God's people don't become more and more godly, more and more like Jesus, but they are changed. Because when sin comes out, it separates them and they are changed into another image.

That's another meaning, the second meaning of pain. They say in the Hebrew language, it's not like Greek. Philosophical, it's quite straightforward the Hebrew.

You repeat it. If you want to make a thing very clear, you say the word and say it for the second time. The Lord Jesus must have inherited some of that.

That's why He often said, verily, verily. He repeated it to make that thing very plain and clear for everyone to understand. He underlined it with red ink.

The same word after the same word. And here in Isaiah 59 verse 2 in Hebrew it says, twice. Separates, separates.

It becomes a wall between you. And when that wall is between you and God, you are changed. Not into God's image, but into somebody else's image.

Likewise, Isaiah 59 verse 2. We haven't got the time to go into it. To look at it from different angles. But when you are peined from God, you become different to what God is.

You are not God anymore. You are different. You have changed.

Not in God's way, but in another way. Matthew 7 verse 21 comes to my mind. Where our Lord says, many will say, Lord, Lord.

Didn't we do great signs and wonders in your name? Didn't we prophesy in your name? Didn't we do great deeds? And he will say, I don't know you, you workers of iniquity. Something happened in these people's lives. Pain got in.

And they were changed into a different image. And eventually at the end when they stand before Jesus. He says, no, I don't know you.

Lord, you don't know us. We prophesied. We did that in your name.

He says, I don't know you, you workers of iniquity. When they sinned, they were changed. And they were no longer the workers of Jesus Christ.

But the workers of iniquity and evil. They didn't discern the time. Do we discern the time? Are we close to God? Are we in harmony, in tune with him? On the same wavelength as Jesus Christ? The triune God, Father, Son and Holy Ghost? When they were at the wedding in the New Testament.

The mother of our Lord came. And said, I've got no wife. And he said, woman.

What you? What me? What me? What you? You can't say that in English. In Greek, it's exactly that. What me? What you? And that's why the English Bible says, What have I got in common to do with you? What have I got to do with you? What me? What you? My time hasn't come, woman.

The time hasn't come. What have I got to do with you? What have you got to do with me? What me? What you? My time hasn't come, woman. No connection? Isaiah 59 verse 2 Something Sin, when sin comes in In it It Sin separates from God Jesus went with his disciples And he said, the son of man must suffer Be persecuted and killed Peter took him by his hand And he pulled the Lord aside and said, Lord, don't say such a thing Jesus says, behind me Satan Behind me Satan Not you just acting like him Behind me Satan After me, devil If you open yourself to something wrong, to sin You can become a devil Dear child of the Lord You understand? Otherwise, this is a book of fairy tales A book of lies and comics Excuse me for those that don't understand German Jesus said to Peter Get behind me, you Satan You are a nuisance to me What is it in English? You are what? A stumbling block to me or what? What does it say in English? A stumbling block A hindrance In Greek An annoyance Scandal Scandal is a trap To which a bait is attached A trap that is set with its bait A trap that is set in such a way that the moment its prey touches it, it snaps shut When Jesus said to his dear disciple Peter You are a devil to me now He says you are a stumbling block, an agonist You are making me angry now He says you, because you are a scandal You are a trap with a bait inside And one just needs to touch that bait And you are trapped In the trap Children of God Have you got ears to hear? Preachers of the gospel Do you understand? What a tragedy when sin comes into a Christian's life Bane, bane Because of that wall, bane, bane Bane, bane When sin comes into your

life No matter what that sin is No matter when you sin In thought, in deed, in word Then a change takes place You are changed in that moment And nothing will hold you back While you open your mouth Your mouth And open in all ways Before your last breath Tell the resentment of my life In my lifetime To create myself Before turning into the world and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man.

Changing the glory of God that should be visible in our lives. Changing not into the image and the beauty of Jesus but into the image of man, man. Humanism, man.

That's the time in which we live in and out of the churches. Every Christ should be changed into the image of Jesus. We should be changed into this image but sin comes in and we are changed into another image.

A humanistic and devilish image. If you've got some spiritual feeling, if you're not completely dead, stone dead, then you get unkind to your wife or to your children or to the person next to you, you become carnal. If you've got some feeling you will notice, hmmm, oh something has disturbed the peace, the joy, something has come in.

What has come in? Humanism. Satanism. You could look in James 3, it will be easier for you.

James 3, 13 to 15. The book of James sometimes was a bit of a problem to Martin Luther. They say, he said, some of the places are like hay and straw.

One, should I say, should understand it but I don't know if I'm correct in saying that. He came out of Roman Catholicism and where you are justified by faith and not by works. And James spoke too much about works.

But I don't find fault with the brother of our Lord Jesus Christ, his biological. I said biological, they had the same mother but not the same father. Before he was born again.

And some people say, yes we can't really agree with James, you know. A drunkard walked, when I was a young man and visited drunkards and prostitutes in Peter Meritsburg town, we were close to clearage. I went down at midnight hour to look after those that had gone astray.

And one man said, look here, it doesn't matter what you do, bad works don't bring a person into heaven, it's just faith. And the other man said, well said dear friend, your good works won't bring you and won't bring me into heaven, but surely they'll bring you into hell. And James says, James 3, 13 to 15, Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom.

But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. Now let's listen very attentively. This wisdom does not descend from above, but it is earthly, sensual, demonic.

This wisdom doesn't come from God. It's earthly, humanistic, and satanic. That happens to you, dear child of God, when you get out of tune and out of step with the man whom you call your savior.

Say, wait Erlo, you're going too far. I'm saved and I can't go astray. A dear friend from the US many years ago, a Baptist preacher, he says, you know Erlo, we Baptists, we don't believe in backsliding, we just practice it.

I don't believe in backsliding. It's a disgrace. God is not well pleased with us.

When we backslide, no room for backsliding for us Christians. We've got to be true, faithful, and loyal to the end. And then we won't get lost.

But if you, there's a warning sign, he that is faithful to the end, and by what a tragedy that just a few are faithful to the end. And that's why in Matthew 7, they were sure of themselves. They said, Lord, Lord, it can't be.

We walked with you. We prophesied in your name. We did the miracles in your name.

He shook his head. He says, I don't know you. You workers of evil.

Something got into that life. Beware. That's why Jesus said, watch and pray.

The whole world speaks about pray, pray, more prayer meetings. We've got to pray more. Pray is secondary.

Watching is number one. Years ago, statistically, they said 60% of the missionaries that go out to the nations, to evangelize, to do missionary work, can't get along well together. They can't get along, live together in harmony.

60%! That's damnable. We expect the Muslims, the Hindus, the heathen, the cannibals to repent. And 60% of the children of God are not one.

They gossip about each other. They scandal. They speak about their brothers and sisters' sins.

You know where you belong? To the devil. Don't tell me you belong to God. You're a liar.

John 14, 23. Jesus said, And Jesus answered and said to him, if anyone loves me, he will keep my word and my father will love him and we will come to him and make our home with him. Whoever understands English, listen attentively.

And I'll ask him to repeat it. These words come out of our Lord's mouth. And he said, I didn't come to judge the world, but the words I have spoken will judge you on judgment day.

You won't get into heaven unless you pass through this hole. And it's very small. Maybe smaller than the eye of a camel.

If anyone loves me, he will keep my word and my father will love him and we will come to him and make our home with him. Verse 26. But the help of the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.

Get that straight and clear. Jesus says if someone claims to love him, If anybody here says, I love Jesus, then keep his word and his commandment. And if you don't, you're a blatant liar.

You need to repent tonight in dust and ashes and confess your sin. Not only before God in secret, hide it there, but expose it and bring it to light. And people say, oh dear brother, I love you with the love of our Lord.

And I love my love for the Lord. The Lord says, if you love me, keep my word. And where are the Christians today that keep God's word? And immediately after that, he says, the Holy Spirit, the Comforter will come and lead you into all the truth and reclaim what we filled with the Holy Spirit.

And yet we don't keep his word. He says, God will forgive you the way you forgive. Is it enough that I forgive my brother seven times? Seven times? Seventy times, Jesus said.

And there's bitterness and unforgiveness in your heart, you child of the devil. Repent, repent, repent and turn to God and ask him to save you from that root of bitterness. Your sins aren't forgiven.

He'll forgive you the way you forgive your brother. You understand that? In which language would you like us to speak that you'll understand? Oh, I can't sleep with so-and-so, not because of his snoring, because of what he says. He's so unkind to me.

He's so disloyal. What has that got to do with you, what the next man does? What the next man does is not what matters, but your reaction to that. And your reaction is a revelation of that which is within you.

That's what you are. Jesus said that they'll be one, as you Father in me, I in you. Like the triune God, that we love each other fervently, that we won't be able to get along without each other.

And what do we pious people say? Saved, so-called saved. I don't mind, let him go his way, I go my way. I pack my suitcase and I go.

But may we just ask you, show us the fruit of your life. Show us the fruit of your life. Is it revival? Is it the gospel and the power of God? Or are you like a person in 1 Corinthians 13, who claims to speak in tongues of angels and men, and has got no love.

And you know what you are? You're just like a clanging cymbal, you just make a noise. Dear friends, the devil does what he can to get into the church of God. In Jerusalem he started, he came with Ananias, he came with Sapphira, and that would have been the beginning of the early church.

And then the Greek women started murmuring, the others they get enough money, they get enough food, but we don't get anything. Oh may God be gracious that the demons that are in your ears will leave once and for all, that you'll understand, understand, understand. And the Greek women started murmuring, the others they get enough money, they get enough food, but we don't get anything.

Some people are treated better. See that's that big advocate of the devil within the house of God. Children of God murmuring, well I'm not a member of the family, you know, I'm not a Leru, and I'm not a Beke, and then go where you belong.

Don't stay in the wrong place. That thing was so serious that the apostles and disciples of our Lord got together and said, brothers let's look for seven men filled with the Holy Spirit, and those that are filled with the Holy Spirit will obey his word. Maybe I'm wrong at this moment, but if I'm not mistaken they chose seven men filled with the Holy Spirit, and not one of them was a Jew.

They just chose Greek men to deal with these wicked widows that brought in the devil and humanism into the church of Christ. We should love each other wholeheartedly, wholeheartedly. Is that your life? Do you love whores? Do your eyes follow the girls? We should love each other with that deep love of God.

Not that love with which your eyes follow a prostitute. No, but that love of God. That's what we should have for one another.

Job went so far and made a covenant with his eyes that he won't look at a virgin, but we look at prostitutes. But he wouldn't look at a virgin. Not even a virgin, a pure girl.

There were some godly men, although we've got to admit they are few and far between. Do you belong to them? Shame on the missionaries. Sixty percent.

They want the Muslims to get saved, and they don't love each other fervently. And Jesus said, they will believe that the Father has sent me, because you love one another. Twelve years before the revival, I went into the world to preach.

I went into the mountains. I erected a tent, a big tent alone, getting just a few boys to help me. I would fetch the people, bring them to the service alone.

And when they'd come into the service, they said, which side have we got to face? This side or that side? I said, you face the preacher. And I'd preach, I'd counsel them alone, and I'd take them home alone. I sweated at times more than on a tennis court.

But dear friends, the day I was filled with the Spirit of God, I can't be alone anymore. I always have to have co-workers with me. I can't, because I was baptized by the Spirit into one body, into one body, into one body.

But we've got different bodies. Make sure that it's the Lord's body you are in, and not the devil's. I'm not a kisser.

I don't kiss people. I've got half a dozen daughters. Sometimes I kiss them on the hand.

You get a kiss from your father on your hand. I didn't even kiss my wife in public. I didn't do it.

I did that behind closed doors. But when I get to heaven and I feel the way I do now, and there's time of shaking a hand with this or that person, I would like to embrace Paul and give him a godly kiss. A godly kiss.

Paul, you know what it means. And I think I know what you went through when Demos turned his back because of the world on you. I know what that means.

And when Paul went to preach the gospel, and his dear co-worker Barnabas turned away from him and chose to go together with the person who had backslidden, I know what that means. And I say, brother, I'm thankful that you didn't lose heart. You carried on.

They asked me on the SABC the other day, when people leave you, don't you get discouraged? I say, if you have a child and it dies, it's hard so. Your heart bleeds. But if a tree is in the center of a big forest, it doesn't shoot deep roots.

But let it be alone on the mountaintop, and the wind from every direction comes. That tree shoots deep roots, shoots deep vortices, and becomes strong. And in the past, until now, through the grace of God, I have become stronger.

But I know what it means. And Paul also knows what it means. If we preachers here tonight, some have left, they thought it stopped this morning.

If every one of us would be red-hot, would be fiery, would be one who believes as the scripture says, according to the word of Jesus Christ, what wouldn't happen in this world? What would be too hard for God? How God's kingdom would flourish? Judgment Day is coming. And we'll have to stand there. And

hidden things will come to light.

And every preacher will stand there. And he said, maybe he'll start with us. Maybe he'll start with us.

And Martin Luther said, hell will be plastered. The tiles of hell will be the heads, the skulls of the preachers. Of course Martin Luther should have said that when it was before Reformation.

Do you know the times in which we live? Do you know the times? Are you with understanding? Are you? Are you living in God's word? May God help that none of us preachers will be found on the wrong side. Not many years ago, a famous man died. I was present at his funeral.

And after that, they say his wife had sleepless nights. He'd always appear to her like a ghost. And he said, my wife, I can't enter heaven.

Because Christ said I served many. I was after many. I was after many.

Demas fell in love with the world. What does world mean? It can mean your own way. Your own will.

Your own desires. That's what you think is right. Dear friends, God willing, I hope that we'll meet again someday.

If not here, by all means up there. This work is my work. It's your work.

It's the Lord's work. When we come together here, it's not because of Sisyphus. If you've got a better place, let us know.

We'll want to join you and support you. But in these days, it wasn't because of Sisyphus. It's because of the man who bled and died.

Who was nothing else but the living God. Who gave his last drop of blood for you. And what do you do for him? We thank the son.

Who is on the Lord's side? Are you on your own side? Are you on your family's side? Are you on your wife's side? On your children's side? On your best friend's side? On whose side are you? Many, many years ago, as a young preacher, a friend, a dear friend, a co-worker, was dealt with very severely. Not only in secret, but in public. And I felt sorry for him.

And after the service, I wanted to go and comfort him. I said, Brother, don't lose heart and try to comfort him. And I went to his place, and I had to go through a long passage, and I couldn't see.

It was dark. I said, I don't know, Lord, whether I should go or not. But God, if it's your will, let him be there.

If it's not your will, let him not be there. So I walked in the night, and I didn't see this wardrobe, and the corner of it. And I banged into it, cut my forehead open, and the blood just got gushed out.

And there was no going forward. I had to turn back, and I said, Thank you, Lord. I've been on the wrong road.

I've been going into the wrong direction. I felt sorry for him. And that's why I went with him.

And today I say, according to his deeds, he's an evil man, fighting the gospel wherever he can to harm the work of the Lord in revival. He'll do it. He'll be your best friend if you say amen to everything he says.

But if you don't go along with him, he'll turn his back on you. Oh, you know who his God is. Amen.

Many years before the revival, out into the mountains in a deep valley, I knelt and I prayed. I said, Lord, may I be so one with you that I'll feel the way you feel, that I'll see the way you see, that I'll speak the way you speak. Grant me that perfect life with you, my Lord and my God.

And it's my prayer till now. And I say, God, let it be so till my last breath. Let's pray.

Lord, here are your dear servants. We've enjoyed this time of fellowship with them. And thank you for the privilege that we could be with them.

Bless them exceeding abundantly above what we can ask or pray for. Not according to our faith, but according to your riches in glory. As far as I know, Lord, you called these Indian brothers to preach the gospel.

You called these English, American, African, German, French, you called them to serve you. You said, as the Father has sent me into the world, so I send you. And God be gracious to us by your grace and loving kindness that we won't be damned and cursed on judgment day, but hear the words, embracing us.

Well done, good and faithful servant. You've been faithful in little things. Now I'll put you above great things.

And as the book of Acts wasn't closed, but is still written today, may it be written, that those that lived and were at Cosizabantu at this time, they knew and had understanding. They were of one heart, one mind, one soul. And we know, Lord, the closer we get to you, the closer we get to each other.

Otherwise, our Christianity is just humbug. And we know, Lord, the closer we get to you, the closer we get to each other. And we know, Lord, the closer we get to you, the closer we get to each other.

And may your grace, dear Lord Jesus, and that divine, heavenly love, godly love, fill and overflow our hearts. And may the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be real and genuine to all of us. Amen.

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