

Spirit of Perversion - Part 1

by Joshua Daniel

The sermon emphasizes the importance of aligning our lives with God's truth and resisting cultural perversions in light of eternal values.

Duration: 25:58

Scripture: Isaiah 1:4, Isaiah 55:8-9, Acts 13:6-12, Acts 13:44-47, Acts 13:49, Acts 13:51-52

Topics: "Spiritual Warfare", "Faithfulness"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the need for Christians to stand firm in their faith and resist the temptations of the world, highlighting the challenges faced by early missionaries and the importance of not compromising the truth. It calls for a rejection of perverse ways and a return to God's enduring truth, urging believers to align their values with eternity rather than the temporary trends of the world.

Transcript

Now, dear friends, you know that we are facing various climactic conditions in various parts of the world. You know my father used to compare a backslidden Christian to one of these heavy road rollers, which have somehow slipped off into the ditch, into the, down the gradient of the road into the ditch. And to get them back onto the road is not easy.

So we see that the economic driving engine of the United States, as it slows down, it is impacting many parts of the globe. And at such a time, naturally, while we think of the suffering which is immediately around us, before us, we hardly take note of the greater sufferings which are to be found amongst disadvantaged people. I am all, you know, I always focused never on the rich and the mighty, but always on the downtrodden, the hard-pressed, the oppressed.

That's where my sympathies and love have always were focused. Now, I believe that the heart of God focuses on us at times like these very much in the same way. But what is it that makes us such slow recipients from the endless resources and reservoir of heaven? What is it that, is it only a trickle? You know, even a little babe says, yes, there's something wrong.

Now, folks, you know, we must be able to deal with that problem. Here, in the first missionary journey, they had embarked upon this great missionary journey in the 13th chapter. Many people cannot understand why it is that Christians declare their faith.

They think it is a question of just proselytizing and spreading their culture. And of course, when they identify Christian culture or with Hollywood, because that's all they see in some of their countries, and they say, hey, we don't want anything of that culture. It is a decadent culture.

But the heart of the gospel is missed when we surround it with this cultural fluff, be it any national culture or international culture. We must come down to the core. What does the Bible say? Anything out of step with God's word is a perversion.

I looked into Webster. Perversion is something which we all know as a word. And Webster says, obstinately disobedient.

And I think it very well characterizes the human heart. Obstinately disobedient. So in the book of Acts, the 13th chapter, we see that when the word of God was being declared in Cyprus, you know, I was very grieved as I looked upon divided Cyprus.

I stood above an elevated little place and looked over the fence at the Turkish side, the Islamist side. When some time ago, Cyprus was suddenly invaded by Turkish forces and they took the northern part. And we were trying to put missionaries into Cyprus, seeing that it was the first location where the early missionaries preached, see, in the book of Acts.

So my heart would go out to Cyprus and I found such a sad and dismal situation, a divided island. So my friends, what did the gospel encounter? It was taken right into the court. There again, I feel very sad at the diminution which we have suffered and our dwarfdom.

Being spiritual and moral dwarfs at a time like this, I think is totally unpardonable. Anybody may pardon you, but dare you pardon yourself. This is not an hour for spiritual and moral dwarfs.

They took the gospel right into the court and that's what we see happening all through scriptural history. But today we have driven it into a little pocket where we feel embattled and besieged and beleaguered and we are ready to just muffle down everything and get so muted that we don't even act as church mice with a little squeak occasionally. My dear friends, this is not what it should be.

So here is Saul. He's addressing the deputy, the Roman head of this island. But there was a sorcerer by the name of Elemas who withstood them.

The eighth verse, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith. You know, my dear friends, just think of the faith of these early disciples to go into a place where it was illegal to be a Christian in the Roman Empire. I wonder how many of us would be found here this morning if it was illegal to go to church.

Yes, we must ask ourselves. It was illegal to be a Christian. Banishment, confiscation of all their property, and martyrdom, just death, were the sentences that were passed.

That was the penalty of being a Christian. What's the penalty we bear? Hardly anything. Some proud fellow somewhere may scoff for a while.

I didn't have too much trouble with scoffers. They could see that I was real and that they did not have what I had in Jesus. And so men of any religion just shut their mouths, or no religion, or communists.

See, we have such an opportunity to lift up Jesus, and we dare not fail him at such an hour as this. You know, my dear friends, when Christianity becomes pure theory, we give birth to communism, atheism, and

worse. That is history.

So people mouth so many things which they don't do. What is the world to make of it? So here we see in the book of Acts, here is this sorcerer withstanding these early missionaries, Paul and Barnabas. Ninth verse, Then Saul, who also is called Paul, filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him and said, O fool of all subtlety and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou cease, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? Now, look at this kind of straight speaking.

You know, we all like an x-ray picture. I remember the time when I had a fracture in my right arm, and my teacher, after the lunch break, when I was in great pain and unable to hold my pen and was nursing this injured hand. You know, I had jumped from a high slide, and so she thought I was faking, and I received little sympathy till the next morning when I was x-rayed, and it was found that it was a fracture.

Now, we all submit ourselves to such x-rays, such examinations. Now, when God's word comes to us, what is it that makes us huff and puff and show a perverted spirit? Here, will thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? They were bringing the right ways of God into that island. It was a missionary conquest.

They were steamrolling the place right in the court. Won't you cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? You know, when you see people in the political world today just bullied for just being a kind of outsider to the inner circle, elite circle, or being a woman for that matter, when we see a whole tendency and an outcry which just bullies, tries to bully somebody by not necessarily truth but a lot of untruth, you see, that shows the heart is wrong. The heart of America is wrong.

That's a perverted heart, and that's what the media projects. Will thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? When politics is all about resisting and perverting the right ways of the Lord today in the world, my dear friends, it means that we must stand fast. Here a little, there a little, we give way and compromise.

You know, it becomes a real fashion. It becomes so trendy to just to be a compromiser. Here right in the court, these two men would not compromise the truth.

Oh, my dear friends, if all the people who are at church this morning in the big prestigious places of the land or of North America were such people, just imagine what an impact it is going to have upon all fields of human activity. But what is it that keeps us from being such people? Is it a perverted heart? Is it perverted thinking? Is it, are they perverted values? You know, when eternity is at issue, and here we are just in the porch entering. I wonder how long you spend on a rainy day or on a snowy day out in the porch.

You say, let me be through with this and get into the shelter and the warmth of the sanctuary or the building. We don't like the porch very long. But after all, where are we today? We are just in the vestibule.

We're in the porch. Where are we headed? Into eternity. What should our values then be? The values of the porch? What are the values of the porch? Let's get out of here quickly.

This is no place for me. I'll catch a cold here. If eternity is there and the porch is here, you don't just settle down and squat in the porch and think this is all I need to adjust myself to the porch because here I stay.

It's a case of pure ignorance. We don't stay in the porch. We enter into eternity.

Then what should our values be? My values should synchronize with the values of eternity, not that of the porch. If my values are those of eternity, I would live a completely different kind of life. I would not bother myself with the present lifestyle such as it is.

If evanescent life trends which are passing, I wouldn't bother myself with those things. I would say I'm an eternal person. I'm headed for eternity.

I'm not a dweller or a squatter on this porch. And this is not the kind of place where I'll be happy anyway. With all this kind of exposure to wind and weather or whatever, my dear friends, when we forget where we are headed and what we are made for, created for, then everything about us gets to be topsy-turvy, out of balance.

We just don't live. We exist trying to fend away wasps and bees or other unpleasant intruders buzzing around us. We can spend all our lives squatting or swatting flies that buzz around us.

No, there is a warfare here. Now, you know, the sequel of this was that this astrologer, this conjurer, this magician was blinded and was led out of the court. And he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand.

So there, it was very clear that this fellow was putting on a big show. We live in a world which has elevated magic and portership to such a high degree that we are going to fill our psych wards in the future. We are going to see an overflow in our psych wards.

We are trying to make the whole country into a psych ward. What a sad thing. But the gospel resists such a thing.

The gospel overcomes such a thing and says you have no quarter here. This is the truth. This is the enduring truth of God.

And no man can hinder it. Let us pray. Let us tell God.

Oh God, we can't squat in the porch. Actually, we ought not to love to squat in the porch. We have to enter the warmth of the building.

Oh Lord, our God, forgive our perverse ways, our perverse lips, perverse thoughts. Do we still grieve you like those disciples grieved you? When you said, how long shall I suffer you? How long? How long? Is this all the return and reward I received for all the endless blessings I have bestowed upon you? How long? Oh generation, perverse generation. Oh Lord, our God, forgive everything that is perverse in our ways, in our mind, in our thinking, in our subservience to the world and its ways.

Everything that is wrong and perverse, obstinately disobedient to your word. Perverseness. Take it away, Lord.

Cleanse us, Lord. In Jesus' holy name. Amen.

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