

Knowing the Presence of God

by Richard Langworthy

The sermon emphasizes the importance of knowing Christ in the Spirit and living a righteous life, which is a fruit of our relationship with Jesus Christ.

Duration: 47:53

Topics: "Presence of God"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of staying focused on Jesus Christ and the redemption we have through His blood. He warns against losing touch with the reality of God's presence in our lives and emphasizes the need to keep the cross central in all that we do. The preacher also highlights the coming pressure and testing on the church, where many Christians may stumble and fall if they put self before Christ. Finally, he emphasizes the connection between personal holiness and our relationship with Jesus, urging believers to walk in obedience and not in the futility of the world's ways.

Transcript

And I feel that the warning that we see in Ephesus is really relevant to the modern church. We are so busy with our lives and our electronic gadgets and our TVs. We are so busy doing things.

But if we wrote down how many minutes a day, how many hours a day. I don't want to say hours. We should start with seconds and then go to minutes.

That we spend alone in the presence of God. Did you keep a diary on it? Maybe we should be very nasty and say how many minutes a week? Amen? Not us, but Christendom in general. Prayer and a relationship with Christ is something that the modern Christian has lost sight of and we have replaced it with many little crutches.

But the crutches are not supporting our lives. They're not feeding our lives. They're not sustaining our lives.

And I see Christian after Christian falling. Christian after Christian losing the fires. Christian after Christian who had passion and clarity and understood the things of the Spirit.

Somewhere they've gone dry. Somewhere it's died. Somewhere the world has come in.

Somewhere their values have changed. Why? Because we've lost touch with the Source. And in these days in which we're living, we cannot afford to do that.

Darkness is not the sun going down. Darkness is spiritual. Darkness is creeping across the face of the world like we have never known it.

The sun in the Spirit is setting. The twilight time is upon us and men are losing direction all the time. I'm going to just highlight a few concepts that he puts in this book because we don't have time obviously to go through it.

In chapter 1 he starts to remind them of very basic doctrinal things. He reminds them in verse 7 that our redemption is through Jesus Christ and no other means. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace.

There's no other way into the presence of God except through the blood of Jesus. Works are not going to take us there. In verse 9 he speaks that God's will for our lives is only through Jesus Christ.

When I put down the cross, when I lay down the centrality of Christ, I lose God's heart. I lose the wisdom. I lose the sensitivity of the plan of God for my life and I start to pick up my own life in my own hands and I run my own race.

He says if you want to know the will of God, it's in Christ, it's through Christ, it's in our relationship with Christ. When I lose the heart of Christ, I start to wander in a desert. Verse 10 he speaks of the resurrection is only through Christ.

Verse 11 of our eternal inheritance is in Jesus. I'm going to skip out of chapter 1. I want to go and look for a moment at chapter 2. In fact, I want to stay in chapter 1 for one second. From verse 15 down to verse 19.

Paul prays this and he says, I pray that the eyes of your understanding be enlightened. That you may know what is the hope of his calling. You may know what is the riches of his glory and what is his inheritance in the saints.

That the eyes of your understanding be enlightened. How? How do I see spiritual things? I don't learn them. I cannot teach somebody spiritual values.

You can't take a carnal man and make him to make him do good things. We are all carnal. Left to ourselves, we are all full of scrap.

Mm-hmm. Yes, I'm top of the class. Oh yeah.

Don't think because I stand here and preach that I have a little halo. I polish it in Sunday mornings before I come to church. That's about the only time it works.

None of us have halos. We are all human beings. We are all prone to fall.

We are all given to sin. All of us. How do I understand what is spiritual? How do I understand what is righteous? How do I know what is dear to the heart of God? It's not by rules.

It's by the eyes of my understanding being opened and they opened in Christ. When I come before the throne of grace, what does it say? That the grace of God teaches me to deny ungodliness and to live godly and righteously. When I come before the throne of grace, it is Christ who opens my eyes.

It is Christ who touches my life. It is Christ who lets me see the exceptions of the world and the clarity of righteousness and I can distinguish between the two. It is Christ who allows me to discern.

Man can't teach me that. And when I lose that relationship, I lose my discernment. I lose my sensitivity.

I lose the ability to taste what is ungodly. To discern it. That's why I shared with you a couple of weeks ago that the way we live is an indication of our relationship with Christ in the Spirit.

How my outward living, my values, my day-to-day contact, it's a reflection of how I know Him in the Spirit. And that's what Paul is saying here. That you would have your eyes opened.

That you would know Him. That you would see Him. Because it's out of that that the rest of this book I'm writing to you, this letter, is going to work.

In chapter 2, the first 9-10 verses, he speaks of the power of our new birth. And again, he says, "...and you His made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world." He says, when you came to Christ, a miracle happened. God took the law, His law, His laws of righteousness, and He stamped them upon a human heart.

You cannot make somebody a Christian. You cannot join a church and become a Christian. You cannot read a book and intellectually give a sense and agree to it and say, I'm now a Christian.

It doesn't work. A Christian is somebody who surrendered his life to Christ in the Spirit, who's had an impact of God upon his heart in such a way that a sovereign act of God has happened upon his life, and the laws of God have been written upon his heart in a way they were never written before, and that man understands the heart of God. He sees things the way God sees it.

He is born of the Spirit of God. His values are turned upside down, and righteousness is imparted to him by the Holy Spirit. That's a Christian.

The law of God is written upon the heart of a man. It's an act of God. If someone is in church struggling, struggling, struggling to live righteously, to live godly, then we must ask, ask them to ask themselves, have I met Christ? Do I know Christ in the Spirit, or am I still looking through the window? But a true conversion separates a man from darkness.

A true conversion, he says, he's made alive. You were in darkness. You were living like the world.

You had the values of the world, but when you met Christ, you met Christ. You became alive. You left the things of the world alone.

You lost your appetite for it. It was gone. No one had to teach you.

It became a part of you. That's the miracle of Christ in us. Paul writes, and he says, the power of the new birth, we must never stop preaching it.

We must never lose sight of it. We must never water it down. We must never try and make it just church membership.

It doesn't work. It is Christ that changes a human heart. We must never lose sight of that.

He then spends time in the next few chapters and discusses the church. It's amazing how much time in this book he spends speaking about the church, the miracle of the church, and how, in verse 14, he has broken down the middle wall of separation, and how he signed a covenant with the Gentiles. And he goes on and he speaks about all the aspects of the church.

But one thing we must understand, he said the church is an extension of Christ. The church is not an institution. The church does not belong to men.

The true church is an extension of Jesus Christ himself. It is called his body. It is made up in God's eyes of those who have surrendered their lives, who know Christ, and as a result live his life out on this earth.

That's the church. It's a miracle. The world looks at the church and doesn't understand it.

Why? Because we are strangers and pilgrims in this earth. We have nothing in common with the values of the world. We have only one desire in our heart, that we may live for him, for our inheritance is eternal.

Our inheritance is in heaven. We do not have an inheritance on this earth. We don't.

We have the provision of God upon this earth. Our inheritance is on the other side of the grave. And that doesn't make sense to a carnal man.

That doesn't make sense to a natural man. It doesn't make sense to a man that has not experienced the power of God's grace and the revelation of his love. And it knows Christ in the Spirit.

But when a man has tasted Christ, and he knows the revelation of Christ, and he knows the person of Christ, it is a joy for him to enter into all that Christ has, because his life is there that he may please him. He gets born into that family. That's the church.

Turn the church around and make it a house of blessing, where we come that God can bless us. And we come to get goodies from God. And we come to get to get all sorts of little natural things from God.

That's not the church. It's a house of man. And the church, we can call ourselves a church today.

We're a body of people gathered together in one place to worship the Lord. Yes. But sitting here doesn't make us individually members of a church, unless Christ is the center and the theme of our lives.

Then there's a church. Amen. And so he puts everything there.

And I don't want to spend time on that. But I want you to come down to verse 17 of chapter 4. And he starts to speak about our personal holiness. He says, I want you to know that your personal holiness is a fruit of your relationship with Jesus Christ.

This I say, therefore, in testifying the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts. The world lives in pure rebellion to God. Sometimes we get mad at the world.

We judge the world. We criticize the world. But it's very simple.

They are living in a state of spiritual blindness. And they will never see any different. It's only a man whose heart has been touched by Christ who sees different.

For them, immorality is normal. They have lost the value of human life. They have lost the value of human dignity.

They don't see anything wrong with it. For them, it's pleasure. For us, when we see it as God sees it, we understand how serious it is.

We understand what it means. Because the world portrays it as normal, the Christian cannot accept the world's values as their values. For us, we will look at these things and we will abhor them.

We will run away from them. We will flee from them. And the world will look at us and say, you are strange.

You are narrow-minded. You are all these things. No, we are righteous.

Why? Because I'm righteous on the inside, not because it's a rule. Do you understand that? And so, Paul writes here and he says, your personal holiness is an extension of your relationship with Christ. Because it's only in Christ that these things become clear.

He says, let's put off the old man and let's put on the new man. It's by association. I'm taking off what I used to be associated with and I'm putting on Christ.

I'm putting on what I'm now associated with. I'm putting on his heart. I'm putting on his values.

I'm putting on his life. I become identified with him, not by rules, but out of relationship. We will struggle with sin as long as we stop praying.

You can take your Bible and you can read it all day long and you will go out and struggle with sin. Because the word by itself without the illumination of the Holy Spirit is just the word. But when I start to take God's word and I get into the presence of God and I open my heart and I allow the Holy Spirit to speak to me, to help me, to talk with me, when I cry to God that I may have a thirst to know him in the Spirit, I can promise you the word of God explodes in our hearts.

And we see sin far off. We see it's trapped. We see it with different eyes.

Suddenly sin no longer has the same tantalizing power. I can look at it and be free from it. Why? Because the life of Christ is rich within my heart.

But when I lose sight of Christ, when I close down that fellowship, when I become too busy, behold sin is knocking at the door. And Paul writes and he says, your whole stature of how we live is a reflection of your personal walk with Christ in the Spirit. Let's ask ourselves this morning, you say, oh brother Richard, I have got so many personal struggles, so many temptations.

The world is so attractive. I agree. Now I have a little fly in your bedroom that tells me how long you pray.

Mm-hmm. Trouble is that I think when he comes out of your bedroom with his clipboard, the clipboard is empty. Or almost.

Amen. Am I being a little nasty? No. But if we can pick up our cross, if we can, you know that idea of denying ourselves is when the Lord says, come I want that time with you.

And soccer's on TV. It's like, Lord you don't understand. It's Liverpool or Arsenal.

They're about to score the most critical goal of the season. How can I not bow my knee to my idol? I love my idol. I worship my idol.

It's so important to me. I go backwards and forwards all day. Watch my idol.

There it is. Soccer will not save your soul from iniquity. Amen.

Watch your soccer. Be free. I don't care about soccer.

I do care about one thing. Is my heart, does Christ know me in the spirit? Do I know him? Am I prepared to put my life in such a place that I will change my program, change the way I live, change my routine, that I will have time to spend time in his presence and get to know him? He said, brother, you don't understand. Praying is so boring.

Oh, amen. You know why it is so boring? Because there'd be a wee desert on the inside here. Yes.

You don't find green plants in a desert, right? No harvest, no fruit. And we can't pray when there's a desert on the inside. I have got to go to God until he can send living waters and water that desert until life comes out of my heart again.

We don't grow in spirit by attending meetings. We grow by being broken in the presence of God. Jesus Christ has got to be the source of every Christian.

We have got to dig our wells and dig them deep, and that doesn't happen. You don't catch prayer like you catch a cold. You don't walk past a Christian who knows the Lord and suddenly, I can pray.

Hallelujah. Here it is. Here I am, Lord.

It doesn't happen like it. Our flesh is alive, but we have got to treasure it. We've got to know, I want to know him.

I want to know his heart for me. I want to hope to open my heart. I want to humble myself.

I am willing, Lord, to get out of bed early in the morning. If it means I've got to go to bed early at night, it doesn't matter. Do what you have to do, but make sure that you start a fine time to dig your well and know the presence of God in your life.

That's what he's writing here. Because you've got to, your personal walk with Christ, your personal lifestyle, your value system, is a reflection of your walk with Christ in the Spirit. I'm going to just touch on chapter 5. I'll show you something.

First one, therefore be imitators of God as their children and walk in love as Christ also has loved us and given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma. But fornication, uncleanness, covetousness, let it not be even named among you as is fitting for the Saints. Now he's not saying we have, don't read that as a rule.

Read it as a lifestyle. Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving thanks. For this you know that no fornicator, unclean person, or covetous man who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.

Now that's a tough statement. But if you read it in the context of what I'm saying, it means this. If a person is giving themselves over to these things, it's because they have no relationship with Christ.

You cannot find yourself doing those things and still have a relationship with Christ in the Spirit. It doesn't happen. So I lose my relationship with Christ, or in this case the world has none.

We fall into all these diabolical things of the flesh. They become attractive to us. They become part of our lives.

It's the natural man. He says the way out of that, the protection from that, the freedom from that, is when I know Christ. When the life of Christ is in me.

When I'm in touch with Christ. When I'm in fellowship with Christ. When the life of the Spirit is burning in my soul.

He says these things are no longer part of us. And the next verse he writes, walk in the light. Where does the light come from? The presence of God.

Why is the church today so troubled with sin? So troubled with compromise? So troubled with iniquity? We have closed the door in our hearts to knowing Christ. And it seems to be boring. You understand? It's like, oh that's hard.

That's tough. It shouldn't be. The moment we say that, we should have a big red warning signal that says beep, beep, beep.

Heart in danger. Beep, beep, beep. Holy Spirit, oil low.

Beep, beep, beep. Amen. Beware.

Beep, beep. Maybe in our hearts we need a siren. I don't know.

I'm gonna pass just the last two things quickly. I want to share something with you at the end. Chapter five, he speaks on the Christian marriage.

Now realize he's talking to a church in a pagan world. He says the only way a Christian marriage will survive is when Christ is the center. And that's not by verbal consent.

That's not by a man and a woman both going to church. That's when each person loses their life and knows Christ in the Spirit. And Christ is the center of their hearts and the center of their marriage.

Only in that condition can those two people give their lives to one another in a manner that's going to build a godly home. Remove Christ and the flesh will come back. Christian by verbal consent.

I'm a Christian. You're a Christian. We're going to be together and have a happy marriage.

No way. It's only the cross. He says here, husbands love your wives as Christ loved the church.

Husbands lose your lives for your wife. It's not natural for a man to do that. It's not natural for a man in Ephesus to even understand that until he has met the power of the living Christ on his knees.

This is not an intellectual gospel. It is not a gospel of works. It is not a gospel of steps.

It is not a gospel of adjustments. It's the gospel of the cross. It's a gospel of brokenness.

It's the gospel of a relationship with a living God upon the heart of a human being that breaks that man's heart in such a way that his life becomes an extension of his God. Outside of that, we don't have a gospel. We lose that relationship, we have nothing.

Chapter 6, he closes with a warning and an encouragement. He talks about the armor of God. But he says to these Christians, we're going to fight darkness.

We're going to have the enemy around us on all sides. I want you to stand. And he describes the armor.

Every aspect of the armor, if you look at it carefully, is a reflection of our relationship with Christ in one way or another. It's not getting up in the morning and saying, I'm putting on the breastplate of righteousness and the helmet of salvation, and I'm taking the shield of faith. Don't try that.

Don't try. Because the devil will die laughing. It's always going to happen.

Nothing else is going to happen. Righteousness comes from the throne of grace. You understand that? Faith comes from the throne of grace.

The sword of the Spirit is alive in my life, and it comes from the throne of grace. Every part of that armor that defends me, that gives me authority, is a reflection of my relationship with Him in the Spirit. He says, when you do that, stand.

Stand, my friend, in this world. Stand for righteousness. Stand for Christ.

Stand for truth. We are called to stand. We are not like the world.

We will stand with authority. We will stand in godliness. And the world will see Christ in us.

We are not defeated. We are not crushed down. We are not trodden underneath.

Why? Because He who is in me is greater than he who is in the world. And that's not because it's a statement. It's a reality.

Christ in me, the hope of glory. Hallelujah. I stand.

Let the world turn to darkness. Let the world rebel against God. Let the world do what it has to do.

I stand. Not because I'm strong. Not because I am better than you.

Not because, or the next Christian, not because I go to church more than anyone else. Because I know Him. I stand.

And He says to this church, this is what I want you to do. I've laid out the whole context of your Christian life. Everything.

He writes it here to this church. He says, I love you. I want, I've covered every part of your Christian life.

And I've, I've put one thing in common. Jesus Christ, our hope. Jesus Christ, our source.

Jesus Christ, our strength. He says to this young church, do not take your eyes off the Lord. A few years later, in Revelation chapter 2, we have a very sad story.

I don't know many how many years later, but it wasn't that long. Because John had, was old now. He was alive when Paul was there.

He wrote this maybe five, ten years after Paul. I don't know. To the angel of the church of Ephesus write, the angel is the pastor.

In Revelation it says that it means the, the, the guardian. This thing says, He holds the seven stars in His right hand. He walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands.

I know your works. I know your labor, your patience, that you cannot be those who are evil, that you've tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and found them liars. That you persevered, had patience, and labored for my name's sake, and have not become weary.

He says, I know what you've done, and if you did it in the past, you used to run well. Nevertheless, I have someone against you, that you have lost your first love. This church had made the one thing Paul wrote in Ephesians, they'd taken it out.

They had become a church of works, and they had lost their relationship with Christ in the Spirit. He says, I remember what you've done, and all these good things, but there's one thing that's gone wrong. You are no longer a spiritual people.

No longer do you know me. No longer do you walk with me. No longer do I know your heart.

No longer do I feel your prayers, that you've lost your first love. That's not emotional. Remember, therefore, from whence you have fallen, and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place.

The only reason that Jesus would remove a lampstand of a church, is because the light has gone out. This church had died. They were meeting on a Sunday, but there was very little in the church.

The people had a form of godliness, but they'd lost the power within 10 years. The influence of the world around them had become such, they had become distracted. Slowly, slowly, men had risen up within them, speaking perverse things, drawing them away to compromises, whittling the gospel, watering down the gospel, changing away the edge of the gospel, until the edge of the gospel had gone.

Christ was no longer center theme. He was mentioned in their hymn books, and, but that is all. They were busy doing things, but they'd lost touch with Christ in the Spirit.

I want to show you something. Can we read Isaiah 53, 43. This is my own interpretation.

It's open for debate, and if in a few weeks time I see that maybe I read it wrong, I'll quietly stand up and say, we can review this. But I want you to see it in the context of what I'm reading, and I don't think personally that I'm too far wrong. Isaiah 43 speaks of the return of the Jews.

Verse 5. Fear not, for I am with you. I'll bring you descendants from the east, and gather you from the west. This is not the return of the Jews from Babylon, because it never came, from all the different points.

And I'll say to the north, give them up, and to the south, do not keep them back. If you go into the history of the return of the Jews, it's exactly how it had to happen with the Jews coming out of Russia. Bring my sons from afar, my daughters from the ends of the earth.

Everyone who's called by my name, whom I've created for my glory. I have formed him, yes I have made him. When did that chapter happen? 1948.

The Jews came back. In fact, the world created the nation of Israel, and the Jews came there. God miraculously, in one day, formed a nation.

Now verse 8. Some of the commentaries will say that he's referring to an idol here, but I don't agree with it. He says, bring out the blind people who have eyes. An idol doesn't have eyes.

You understand? He's talking about those who see, but choose not to see. The seeing who are blind. Meaning, the obvious is in front of you, and you choose not to look at it.

And the deaf who have ears. That all the nations gather together, and that the people be assembled. Who among them can declare this? What? What I've just said from verse 5. Who among you can believe that in one day I brought back my people.

In one day I made a nation. In one day I gathered them from the east, and the north, and the south, and the west. In one day I did what men said could never happen.

He said, all the nations, I want you to gather around, and look at Israel, and understand that I am God, and what I have done in one day. And take heed. Even if you don't want to.

Mm-hmm. Let them bring out their witnesses, that they may be justified. Well, let them say it is the truth.

You are my witnesses, says the Lord. Okay? That you may know and believe me, and I, and understand that I am He. And before me there was no God formed, nor shall there be after me.

I am the Lord, and besides me there is no Savior. Israel, the formation of Israel, was a sign and a wonder in our generation, or in my generation. No, not mine.

Just before me. Amen. Some of you gray heads, very gray heads, your generation.

Do you agree with me? Will you agree that Israel is a miracle? Will you agree that God says to the nation's witness, will you agree that every time, every, any little Muslim country that's tried to attack Israel, no matter how big the armies have been, have been destroyed. And the world, you know that they take the battles, where the Arab countries have come to crush Israel, and they, an amazing way that the Jews have defeated them, and they will not teach those battles at Sandhurst. And what's the Academy in America? West Point.

They will not teach them there, because it doesn't make sense. You can't take an army officer, a young army officer, and say, now let's have a look at the six-day war. This is how you win a war.

It doesn't work. It's how you lose a war. So they will not discuss the battles of Israel in these famous military academies, because God has fought the wars.

And they know that. Luke chapter 21, verse 24. And they will fall by the edge of the sword and be led away captive into all nations.

So the Jews. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the time of the Gentiles are fulfilled. Interesting little verse.

Insignificant, stuck in the middle of Luke. When did the Gentiles no longer trample Jerusalem? 1967. Six-day war.

For the first time, the Jews regained control of the Holy City completely. The Gentiles no longer governed it, ruled it, trampled it down. The Jews won it.

And Jesus said, when the Gentiles no longer trample Jerusalem, it's the end of the time of the Gentiles. 48, He said, come bear witness. I have done a miracle.

I want the world to know that I am the Savior. That's a warning that something's about to happen. 1967, the Jews, the Gentiles leave Jerusalem.

The Jews take over. That's a sign, Jesus said, in the time of the Gentiles is drawing to a close. You punch in 67 from 2012.

Now we are 2013 already. You get 45 years. I don't know how, whether my theology here is right or wrong.

But I was talking to a pastor the other day. One, a man that I know is a great student of the Scriptures. And out of the blue, he asked me a question.

He said, Richard, do you believe in the end of the time of the Gentiles? I said, oh, you mean 1967. He said, yes, you're the only man in town who says that. No one else knows that.

I said, six day war. I said, do you know what? Have you taken 67 away from 2012? He says, no. I said, it's 45 years.

He goes, oh my goodness. Because if God works on to the year of Jubilee, that makes it 50. That now gives us four years.

You understand that. What I am saying is this. Romans chapter 11, Paul speaks of God bringing the time of the Gentiles to an end and breaking off the Gentile branch and grafting in the Jewish branch once again.

The reason I'm saying these things is that we must understand that we are living in the last days. And the last days speak of a great falling away. The last days speak of men turning to darkness like they have never turned to darkness before and rebelling against God in every form they can.

With such arrogance that they will act as though the living God does not exist because he has been quiet. But he hasn't been quiet. He put Israel on the map and said to the world, bear witness to what I have done.

And they've closed their eyes and they've closed their ears and they say, we will not witness, we will not, what did I say, give credit for a miracle like that. We're living in times of unprecedented compromise in the church. Men are rising up today to turn people away after every doctrine possible that takes away the glory of Jesus Christ and the cross of Jesus Christ and the centrality of Christ.

They will offer them anything they can. I don't know how many of you heard our famous prophet, what he promised Zimbabwe at the New Year. Did you hear about it? He said, diamonds are not enough.

They're a thing of the past. He prophesied, it's written on the news. We are going to have gold, gold, so abundant you'll pick it up in the streets.

God is going to bless the people with gold. You'll find gold everywhere. 30,000 people were clapping and screaming and shouting.

30,000 deceived people. These are ambassadors of hell. God isn't interested in putting gold on the streets, feeding the flesh of men.

He wants his country to repent. This country needs to be told to turn from her, her wicked ways and turn from her idolatry and turn from her unrighteousness and prepare for Christ. Not chase gold.

Men are arising with stories and lies day by day by day, but why do people follow them? Because they've lost the revelation of Christ in the Spirit. When your prayer life dies, when your walk with Christ grows cold, when you're the Word of God doesn't burn in your heart like a fire, you will start to follow the words of men and they will appear to be right and they'll appear to have wisdom and they will lead men and women down paths of destruction. In these days of darkness, every Christian has got to dig his own well.

We have got to walk by faith. We've got to know Christ in the Spirit. We've got to stand in truth, the truth inside me.

I cannot hold your hand. I cannot take you down the road. You have to stand because of who Christ is in your heart.

It's easy. When the sun is shining to find your way down the road, but when the sun is set, we are going to stumble and fall into the ditch unless we have a light in our own hearts. Folks, I believe time is short and I believe there's a great pressure coming on the church and I believe there's a time of testing coming on the church and I believe many Christians are going to stumble and fall and many Christians are going to lose their way, not because God has said it, but because they have put down their love for Christ and they've put self back on the altar.

And it's hard in these days of darkness because there's a thousand voices and a thousand false prophets. But in this last days, one of the things that God's going to do to test the carnal church is to let the church face darkness for only those who are sincere will have the oil in their lamps when he returns. Those that have no oil are not ready.

That's why I said to you, he is the master of the resurrection. He is the one that gives the resurrection. He is the one to whom the resurrection belongs.

If the oil is gone, no resurrection, because we've served another God. Folks, I don't know. I have a fear of God in my heart.

I have an urgency in my heart, which I could stand on the top of every building in Boulivar and make every Christian open their eyes and understand where we are going and what we are facing. But all I want to know is that for each one of us, you can hear what I'm saying today and walk out of there and treat it as something like you're entitled to do that. Or you can go home and get on your knees and say, God, open again the fountains of life within my heart, because I have lost touch with the reality of the presence of the living God in my life.

That's our individual decision. We must walk this road individually. We must walk with Him knowingly.

We must abide with Him, each one of us. Then we become a church that's alive. Outside of that, one by one, we will see people falling and taken, because as Christ dies, as it were, the light of Christ dies, so the power of the flesh will quietly and subtly come in to lead us once again.

Keep the cross central to all that we do. Does that make sense? Amen? Write that down as your first sermon for 2013. Like, I remember that one.

But don't remember it, live it, because somewhere in the spirit, times are serious. Let's not be like a church in Ephesus that had so much input and yet lost everything, because they chose not to be careful. And Father, so I pray now, that somewhere you would open the eyes of our understanding, that we wouldn't take as cheap the things of God.

Oh Lord, the world says, come and be busy and urgent and important. But this world is but a vapor that is passing away. It is Christ that is urgent.

It is Christ that's important. How I pray, Lord, that you would stir our hearts, that the altar of prayer would come back into our lives. The altar of sacrifice would come back into our hearts, fully established.

We are people who know You, who seek for You, who draw from You, who have found in You, Lord, all the riches that we need. That our faith is strong. Strong.

We're not moved by the world, but we see an eternal city, and we understand our inheritance, and we know the glory of the risen God. And our lives belong to You. You've done so much for us.

But somewhere, Lord, You look to us to respond. Oh, that our hearts would respond diligently to Your Word and to Your truth for our lives. Strengthen every heart, dear Lord.

Strengthen every life. Let no one fall. Let no one be discouraged.

But let us come to the throne of grace and know You, Lord. Lay aside our weaknesses and find the strength of Christ. How I pray for that, Lord.

Open our eyes. Open our hearts, Lord. Open our ears.

Strengthen every member and every Christian for these days. For Father, I thank You for it. We bless Your name.

Amen. Let's stand. Let's stand and worship the Lord quickly before we go home.

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