

A True Church (Tharptown Baptist Church)

Tharptown 2008 and 2009

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Bible Text: Ezekiel 13:9-14

Preached on: Monday, February 2, 2009

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Well, it is a great privilege to be here again with you this morning, this Lord's Day. Let's go to the Lord in prayer.

Father, I come before you in the name of your Son and I pray that you would settle this place, that there would be a reality of something of who you are, not a game, not a tradition, but a meeting with God. And I pray that you would work in the hearts of men. Lord, some men need to see your mercy. Other men need to see your judgment and your wrath. Some men need to be drawn by your love and others need the very foundations of their being shaken with fear. Lord, you know the hearts of all men. Nothing is hidden before you, not even the abyss. You know every Word before it comes forth from our tongue. I pray, Lord, that this church would become real and they would meet in the reality of who you are. Father, I ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Before we return to the book of Timothy, Paul's epistle to Timothy, I want to go just for a moment to the book of Ezekiel chapter 13.

Just take a look at this and see where it takes us. It may take us so far that we won't be able to get to Timothy until later, but let's just take a look. Chapter 13 verse nine.

Now in this text God, through the prophet Ezekiel, is speaking against the other prophets. He is speaking a word of God against those who claim to speak the Word of God. These are called prophets. At times they are referred to as shepherds or pastors.

Now I want you to understand something today. The problem in our country is not liberal politicians. It is not the Republican party or the Democratic party. One of the greatest problems in our country today are pastors. And not simply liberal pastors, but those who would claim to hold to Scripture. Conservative, supposed Bible believing pastors.

Because even though speaking forth something of the Word of God, they have learned to speak it by taking the edge off of it so as to not get themselves in trouble.

Much of what is called church today is nothing more than a Six Flags over Jesus, a traditional meeting once a week where many times songs and sung. And let's admit it. We don't even think about what we are singing, maybe don't even know why we have come except that it is what we have been taught to do.

Did you come here this morning with an expectation to meet with God? Did you actually think he would do something or that he would even show up? Or is this just something that you do?

And then there is so much today, so much bondage to what we call the fear of man.

I was speaking to one pastor years ago who had gone through hell in a church. And he said, "I have come to this conclusion. All men are cowards."

The Bible speaks a great deal about fearing men. Why do we fear men? Primarily because of idolatry, self idolatry. We care for our own preservation.

Now what type of man do you want in this pulpit?

I said last week or two weeks ago, I think, and I will say it again. If you desire to have just a normal, typical church that just has a good time and everything is kind of going like every other church in the area, please do not bring a young man in here or an older man in here who desires to preach the Word of God and follow it. Please do not do that. Bring a guy in here with a great personality who will spend about half of his time in his sermon telling jokes and stories and anecdotes and little moralities. And then in the end throw in a long invitation and send everybody home with his blessing. Bring in somebody like that who want to play church and just have a good time with you and go places and do all sorts of things and always tell you things that will make you feel good. Bring in a guy like that. I plead with you. If that is what you want, bring him here.

Please don't bring a Bible believing pastor here because he will destroy you and you will destroy him.

But if you truly want to know God and follow him no matter what it costs, then bring a man in here who, above all things, fears God more than he fears any man. Because here is something that you need to understand. A man of God is primarily that. He is a man of God. And although he must be loving, he must not be mean spirited or critical. That usually comes about when a boy of God tries to be a man of God too early in his ministry and he develops a mean and critical spirit and he demands stuff from people that he himself is not living. That is not what you want. But you want a man of God who is primarily a man of God and not a man of the people.

You see, we were raised in a democracy. We always want a man of the people.

You don't want a man of the people because the people aren't the authority here. You want a man of God. As it was said of John, "There was a man sent from God."¹

And the prophet of old said, "The God before whom I stand."

In that sense he was a man who spent more time with God than with anyone else. He was more concerned about God's opinion than he was anyone else's opinion. He came to do God's will.

Such a man knows something not only about the love of God, but about the terror of God.

Now that is not something that you hear much about today, about the terror of God. Have you ever read through the Old Testament prophets? Have you ever read the book of Revelation? Then you know something about terror, a terror so great that the greatest men on earth at that time will cry out for the rocks and the mountains to fall upon them, to hide them from the wrath of Jesus Christ.

This is a magnificent theme. It is a terrible theme. It is a wonderful theme. There ought to be a sense—and there is a sense. If you look in the book of Revelation when a church... in the book of Acts when a church is walking with God and the church leadership is walking with God do you see there that it says that people were even afraid to approach them?

Now that is language totally and completely foreign to us today as a church. We have to get back to the biblical model, not the model of culture, not the model of new fangled church growth theories that come out of seminaries. We have to get back to what does Scripture say?

Now let's look at this for just a moment. Look what he says in verse nine.

He says, "So My hand will be against the prophets who see false visions and utter lying divinations. They will have no place in the council of My people, nor will they be written down in the register of the house of Israel, nor will they enter the land of Israel, that you may know that I am the Lord GOD."²

Now there were certain prophets that were prophesying to the people. They were telling the people things and they seemed to have the people's ear. Now, from the New Testament we understand that these people are like wolves in sheep's clothing. Well, then how do they get among the people of God? How is it that such men find their way among the people of God and get their ear? It is because they tickle the ear. They tickle the ear.

¹ John 1:6.

² Ezekiel 13:9.

Spurgeon talked about the need to study to know God, but the need to study also to know people. If you have preached long enough and you have been around enough people and you are discerning, you begin to know what people want to hear. And if you want to have a wonderfully prosperous ministry outside of the will of God and you want to have a whole bunch of people, you just study what people want to hear and then you give them what they want to hear. Just give them what they want.

How do men get elected to office? Because they promise people what people want.

Here is the problem. What people want, if they are an immature, ungodly people, is not what is best for them.

I have three little children: a seven year old, a five year and a 16 month old. Yes, I should be their grandfather, but I got a late start.

If I gave them what they wanted they would be destroyed.

So he says here, “So My hand will be against the prophets who see false visions and utter lying divinations.”³

Now let me share with you something. It is astounding, troubling, maybe even terrifying. If I were to simply come here for about a week or a month and just teach on the psychology, the secular psychology that has entered in to evangelical Christianity in America. You would soon come to discover that a great deal of our teaching, a great deal of our preaching and a great deal of our thought life is governed not by the Word of God, but literally by the psychologists who are anti Christian and developed their discipline for the soul purpose of destroying Christianity or providing an alternative to it.

You see, a person who is deceived, they hardly ever know it. That is why we call them deceived. And one of the most dangerous things you can do is not to tell a full out and out lie or provide a deception that is 100 percent deception. The worst thing you can do is give 50 percent truth and 50 percent deception because there is enough truth in there to cover up the deception and people believe that they are following the truth when what they are following is a lie, because water that is 90 percent pure and 10 percent tainted is tainted water.

So, you see, it is absolutely necessary to sit under the preaching of the Word of God so that the lies of our own life are exposed. You see, all things begin in the Christian life within the realm of truth. That is why Romans chapter 12 verse two tells us to be constantly renewing our mind. Renewing our mind in what? In the truth. Once you become a Christian you have to begin to rework your thought life to discover what is true and live in accordance with that. And you can't make a truce with the world. Find out what God desires and to do it.

But when men come into a pulpit, full of stories, full of anecdotes, full of quaint sayings,

³ Ibid.

knowing how to tickle ears, concerned about their own preservation, whether they will have a job tomorrow or not, the people of God will not be fed. You will not grow and even your children will be brought into danger.

So you need someone who is not prophesying false visions or uttering lying divinations. For these men themselves have no place in the counsel of my people. A true priest, how is he to be? He is to be like Ezra. He is to be like that long lineage of men who diligently studied the Word of God, who meditated upon the Word of God, who disciplined their lives to follow the Word of God and communicate it to others.

“...nor will they be written down in the register of the house of Israel.”⁴

It is absolutely amazing what we are going to see on the day of judgment of how many pastors, even in the conservative realm of American Christianity are actually unconverted.

About whom do we think Jesus is speaking in Matthew seven when he says that many will prophesy, many will do all sorts of religious things, but in the end they will hear, “Depart from me. I never knew you”?

Now when you preach a gospel that is like the gospel that is preached in America today where everyone in this county basically believes they are saved because one time in their life they repeated a prayer with a pastor and that pastor declared them saved. So you get a church full of people, many times many of those people in the church are not even converted, yet they are members. And so what do you do? You vote on certain things and the majority wins. But if the majority is carnal, if the majority is unconverted then in what direction does the church go? Does it go in the direction of the will of God? No, it goes in the direction of the great majority who never even read their Bibles.

Do you see the danger?

Now that doesn't mean that someone ought to come in here and take over the rule, because the Bible teaches a congregational government. The Bible teaches that even when leaders make a decision, it is submitted to the body and the body affirms it or declines affirmation. But do you see the problem? If people are not instructed in the Word of God and even some people within the congregation are unconverted, then when the majority makes a decision, what way does it go? It doesn't go toward God's will. It goes completely the opposite direction.

And so that is why you need someone here who is going to prophesy the Word of God.

Now, not his own opinions and not someone who is going to invent a whole bunch of rules that the Bible doesn't even give us and put them upon you, but someone who line by line is going to go down and teach the Bible and not only teach it neutrally, but exhort you also to obey.

⁴ Ibid.

Now he says here, “that you may know,” in verse nine, “That I am the Lord GOD.”⁵

He is going to judge these men so that you will know that he is God.

Now let me share with you something. Remember Ananias and Sapphira? Now they didn't do too well in church, did they? What happened to them? They were killed. Who killed them? Did you ever ask that question? God did. He killed them. Why did he kill them? They lied.

Would you want God to do the same thing in this church today, kill all the liars? Would you want God to come and kill every person who made a commitment to do something in this church and they didn't fulfill it?

Now what is going on here. How come... why did that happen? I mean, Ananias and Sapphira, they sold their land, they gave part of the money to the church, kept part of it for themselves. Was that a sin? No. They could have kept the whole thing and it wouldn't have been sin. The problem is they lied and they tried to make people they had given everything and God killed them.

Now why is it that so many terrible things can happen in church today? I mean, all sorts of things that people who call themselves Christians, they do and God doesn't do anything. It is a sign of God's judgment. Upon whom? Upon the church.

One of the greatest evidences of the presence of God in a church is that when people live in rebellion, they identify themselves with the church, but they live in sin, God comes and acts against them in order to cleanse his church.

But when a church as a whole is so far away from the will of God, I mean, as a whole, then God does nothing. His judgment is by doing nothing and by letting people just continue on with church as normal.

So one of the greatest evidences that God is among his people is that he disciplines his people. And one of the greatest evidences that God has nothing to do with a church is that he lets the members of the church live in sin and he does absolutely nothing.

I am afraid to say that this the case for the majority of the churches in the United States of America.

I remember brother Adrian Rogers one time saying this. He said, “I have got good news and bad news for you today. The good news is this. God is here. The bad news is this. God is here. It just depends on what side of the line you are standing on.

Let's go on.

⁵ Ibid.

He says, verse 10, “It is definitely because they have misled My people by saying, ‘Peace!’ when there is no peace. And when anyone builds a wall, behold, they plaster it over with whitewash.”⁶

One of the greatest crimes of a pastor is to tell a group of people or an individual, “Peace,” when there is no peace.

Now let me show you how that can happen individually and how that can happen collectively.

Individually, let’s say that I have not been a pastor for years. All my pasturing was actually done outside of this country, living in South America for as many years as I did. I was a pastor there. But let’s say I was the pastor of this church. And let’s say that you have a 16 year old son who is beginning to live very worldly. He is rebelling against his father. He is using language he shouldn’t use. He is running with the wrong people. He is starting to drink, but when he was 14 years old he made a profession of faith in Jesus Christ.

Now, I am going to differentiate between the way the Southern Baptist pastors in the last century would have handled it compared to the way most Southern Baptist pastors would handle it today. If the church was large enough, first of all, they wouldn’t handle it at all. It would just keep going. Dad wouldn’t really handle it biblically. Mom wouldn’t handle it biblically. The pastor wouldn’t handle it biblically. No one would handle it biblically.

Or if the pastor did go he would say something like this. Let’s say the boy’s name is John. He would say, “John, you were saved two years ago. I was there when you asked Jesus to come into your heart and you were even baptized. So you are saved. You are not acting like it. You need to return to the Lord, live for him. You are going to lose your reward. You are going to just... John, we love you. God loves you and you just need to come back.”

Now that is the way it would be handled now.

How would it have been handled 100 years ago in the same denomination? It would have been handled this way.

The pastor would have gone to John in the presence of his father and said, “John, when you were 14 you made a profession of faith in Jesus Christ.”

Now notice the difference in the language. He didn’t say, “John, when you were 14 you were saved.” He didn’t say that. “You professed with your mouth to be saved. You said that you had repented of your sins that you had believed in Jesus Christ. There seemed to be some evidence, so much so that the church baptized you.”

Notice, they looked for evidence before they baptized him.

⁶ Ezekiel 13:10.

“And we baptized you. But now, John, you are living like an unbeliever. You rebel against your parents. You walk with the ungodly. You are living in immorality and all the evidence at this moment points to the fact that you were never born again. Now, John, I cannot discern your heart, but I can view your actions and this I will tell you. You could be in some state of what they call backsliding to some degree. But prove your calling. Make your election sure as Peter says. Repent and come back to the things of God. Prove that you have truly been born again, because, John, if you continue in this, you are giving all the evidences that your conversion is a false conversion and you are yet in the faith, you are yet in the roll call of the course of Israel. You are lost, John. Repent. You are in a dangerous, dangerous place.”

That is not telling him, “You were saved and you have lost your salvation.” He is saying, “The way you are living indicates you never came to know the Lord.”

Now look at the difference between the way that is handled in the old days and the way it is handled now even if it is handled, which it rarely is.

So, you see, we have this thing of saying, “Peace, peace,” when there is no peace. I think I gave the illustration of a well known pastor in a First Baptist Church that I know who led a boy to the Lord when he was nine and afterwards the boy showed no fruit and lived a life of terrible sin until he was in his middle ages selling drugs, running with horrible, immoral people doing all sorts of crimes and everything else. But when he died his funeral service was in that same First Baptist Church and that pastor stood there in front of all that young man’s friends, hundreds, and said, “Our wayward sheep has finally gone home. We know he was saved because I was there when he asked Jesus into his little old heart when he was nine years old.”

And then all those wretched people without Christ walked out of there saying, “Peace, peace. I am saved, too.”

You see how bad our theology is?

Now is that loving? Let me ask you a question. Is that loving to do that to a person? It most certainly is not. Why have we changed? Because of bad theology we have forgotten where we have come from as Baptists. And, secondly, the fear of man.

Let me ask you a question. If a pastor who in every other way demonstrated that he was very loving and very biblical came to you one day and says, “I have been observing your child and I know they made a profession of faith in Christ, but they show all the appearance of not knowing God at all.”

Would you become angry? Would you get mad at him? Or would you say to yourself, “Wow, this man loves me and loves my son enough to risk my retaliation against him.”

I want you to think about that.

One hundred fifty thousand people die without Christ every day without ever hearing the gospel of Jesus Christ. And they go to hell, countless people in congregations because ministers are all about peace, peace when there is no peace. Countless people in congregations die and go to hell. Is that loving? Or is it more loving to say, "I am going to love you so much that you may even get angry with me"?

My little boys are a lot happier when we walk through Walmart and they see something from Star Wars and I get it for them. They are very happy. "Oh, dad is the greatest dad in the world."

But when Dad says no, they are not as happy with dad when we get in the car. But I can assure you, Dad showed more love to them by restraining their lusts than he did by indulging their lusts.

They are not happy with dad, but dad did the right thing because he loves them.

You know, that is why most children are not disciplined by their parents. It is not because the parents love them so much they can't discipline them. It is the parents love themselves too much they can't discipline their children because they want their children to like them.

So, see, when we talk about a man of God... and here... let me share something else with you, church, that is very important. I want you to understand this. When we talk about church leadership and a pastor, far too long have we seen church leadership residing in only one man. That is wrong. When we talk about bringing a pastor to a church you are not talking about, ok, we are going to bring a guy in here and he is going to lead us.

The Bible says that there is wisdom in what? One man or in a multitude of counselors? There needs to be godly men in this church who are trained, who are raised up to do what? To do the ministry.

Now, of course, not all are going to be supported, not all can work full time. But we ought to be talking about a group of godly men who can come together to help lead and care for the church.

They are called elders and they are called deacons. And we will have to seriously consider that, what those ministries are and how they are supposed to function.

Several years ago I was asked to take over a church for about six months, a very large church in Texas. And it was in shambles. It was in shambles. And it had gone to... I think it had probably about 750 people. It had just dropped. It was just... and I was walking through this great auditorium. I will never forget. I was walking through there and going, "God, we have got to put this church back together. You know, you need to show me, you know, what are we going to do? How are we going to put this church together?"

There is so many people who are not truly being pastored or cared for. We have got to figure out some organizational thing.”

I was still young back then.

And, I mean, I am just praying and walking through that auditorium and then all of the sudden, no, I didn't hear a voice. I wasn't impress on all my heart, but I started remembering the things that I had read in 1 Timothy.

God said, “I have given you an organization. They are called elders and they are called deacons. You get them working right with God and that is how I want my church taken care of.”

And so, see, it is all here in the book. We have got to go back to this book.

Now it says they say, “Peace, peace, when there is no peace.” There have been times in my life when I have been afraid. I remember during the war down in Peru being afraid, bombs blowing up, blowing the windows out our church, gunfire interrupting services and all sorts of horrible things. That made me afraid.

But none of that made me as afraid as this, having to confront the church in its sin. I mean, I go out and preach on the streets sometimes. Unbelievers throw things. That's fine. They are unbelievers. They are supposed to throw things. They are not supposed to really like the message.

But, boy, when you go and you have to confront the people who are your own people, your own brothers and sisters in Christ, that is frightening because here is what will happen. Many times they just won't listen. They will just get mad. And then—and this is one of the greatest errors of young pastors. I am going to tell you what it is. They actually think people will think logically. That is one of the greatest errors of young pastors. They think that if they go to the congregation with all the Scriptures and a logical argument that, well, people have to hear.

They won't. They won't even listen.

I remember one time going in to a group of leaders and saying, “Gentlemen, there is rampant sin going on in the congregation. All this is going on. There is immorality. There is adultery. There is this. Everyone knows about it. Something has got to be done. We have got to follow Scripture on this.”

So I went and I laid out the argument of Scripture, line by line of Scripture. Then I go to Baptist history and I say, “And this is what Baptists have done in the past so you know I am not just inventing this. So here we have Scripture that says this. Here we have Baptist history that says this and so what are we going to do?”

Well, they got furious. And I said, “Well, show me where I am wrong in the Scriptures. Open up your Bible and show me where I have misinterpreted. And then go into Church history. Here are the books, the Southern Baptist books. Take them and show me where I have misunderstood what these old men said.”

No one left a Scripture and no one went to the Baptist history. They just got mad.

Now, is that right? Tell me, is that right? No, it is not right.

Now, a friend of mine goes, “Paul, I am going to go in there and talk to those men.”

And I said, “Why?”

He said, “Well, brother Paul, I love you, but you are sometimes more concerned about winning the argument than you are winning the individual. I am sure that if I go in there and just speak with them logically with the Scriptures open, they have got to understand.”

I said, “Brother, don’t do that.”

Well, he does. And they really got mad.

And he said, “Brother Paul, do you know what one of the main leaders told me, screamed it out at me?”

And I said, “What?”

“When I showed him in front of everybody else, ‘Well, this is what Jesus said right here,’ and I said, ‘Brother, it is in the Bible,’ this man said, ‘I know it is in the Bible, but that don’t make it right.’”

Now that was the same man who would defend the inspiration of Scripture. Do you see how illogical we can get?

Now let me ask you a question. A pastor shouldn’t come in here and make all kinds of radical changes. That is not what I am talking about. But if a pastor shows you the Scripture and shows you Church history and all of the men of God down through history are all in agreement that that is what this passage means, what are you going to do? Are you just going to get mad? Are you going to look at the Scripture yourself and study it? Are you just going to get mad?

Those are questions.

Now that is not going to come up probably for a long time, but it will come up sooner or later. And what you have to decide is: Are we really going to be a people of the Bible? That is what you have to decide.

Now let's go on. Verse 10.

It is definitely because they have misled My people by saying, 'Peace!' when there is no peace. And when anyone builds a wall, behold, they plaster it over with whitewash; so tell those who plaster it over with whitewash, that it will fall. A flooding rain will come, and you, O hailstones, will fall; and a violent wind will break out. "Behold, when the wall has fallen, will you not be asked, 'Where is the plaster with which you plastered it?'"⁷

Now look what it says for just a moment in verse 11.

"A flooding rain will come."⁸

Have you ever lived in a place where floods could break out in literally just a few minutes and sweep away everything? This is not only that, but hailstones. I mean, in the Bible sometimes they talk about hailstones defeating entire armies.

Have you ever been in a hailstorm, I mean with golf ball size hail? You were only in it once unless you got under some shelter.

And then he goes out. "And a violent wind will break out."⁹

We have had so many tornadoes rip through the land. Nothing can stand in their way. Nothing can oppose them.

So what he is talking about, "I will violently come and I will judge."

Now he is talking about men who built works that they plastered over and made it look really good. And it is all plastered over. Why was it plastered over? Because if you got through the whitewash, if you got through the plaster and looked inside the work, it was rubbish.

Now Paul talks about this to the Church in Corinth, doesn't he? He says men's works will be judged and they will be tried by fire and the hay, wood and stubble will burn up and the only thing that will be left is that which is precious.

Now, folks, let me give you just a short history of contemporary Christianity in what goes on. Churches used to be built upon what? The preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the teaching of the Word of God and heartfelt worship of obedience to the Word of God. So we can say it was built upon theology, truth, doxology, worship and praxis, the practice of what you believe and sing about. So that was what church was built upon.

⁷ Ezekiel 13:10-12.

⁸ Ezekiel 13:11.

⁹ Ibid.

Not today. Oh, my goodness. You ought to go to some of these conferences, church growth conferences. I mean every kind of Wall Street marketing technique you could possibly ever imagine to build a church. But what is happening? It is all based upon something that has no foundation and no structure. And when the storms come it will fall apart.

Let me just give you an example. We used to say this in Peru where it could happen. And many times I was aware that I was preaching to congregations where there were spies in the congregation that would go back and if you said the wrong thing, terrorist group would come in and kill you.

And we used to always say this. You can tell how true the church is when there is a man standing in the back with a machine gun. Who is going to come to church on the day when the man is standing there with a machine gun?

People come to church because... you know, churches are big... I hear church growth guys saying, "We need to build churches based upon meeting the felt needs of people." That is preposterous. That is like we need to get elected to office by promising everybody doesn't work everything they want.

You don't build a church meeting the felt needs of people. You build a church preaching truth, teaching people the Word of God and to tell them it is not all about them. It is all about God. But when God becomes everything in their life, he works in their life so to bring something of a spiritual prosperity in life.

Of all the things we do, evangelism and plays and music and all these things which aren't necessarily bad, all the activities we have, would it all be destroyed one Sunday morning if persecution broke out and no one came to church because they knew they might get in trouble, they might lose their home, they might lose their land, they might lose everything as in the book of Hebrews?

Do you see? And storms may be coming upon us. If storms do not come upon us as a people, if persecution does not break out in this country, we will be the first people in the history of Christianity who didn't really have to go through anything.

So we want to build a church that will weather storms.

In the mission work we have a thing that we call rice Christians. It is a very common terminology used by different denominations, missions organizations, rice Christians. And what does it mean? It is when an American goes over and tries to build a church and he does it by giving away rice, by giving away free clothes, by meeting the felt needs of people. In that you can sometimes take an American missionary who does this type of thing—and not all missionaries do this type of thing, but some do—you have him start his church and then have—let's use the country of Peru as an example—you have a poor Peruvian start a church 10 blocks away. This American church, I mean, the first day he has got 50 people in it, then 60, then 70, then 80 and he is growing and running and

gunning and doing all sorts of things. They have got multimedia. They have got money to have proper speakers and microphones and a pretty place to meet and everything else. And I mean by the end of the year there is 150 people in this church.

The Peruvian pastor over here, dirt floor, part of the walls are made out of [?] which is a woven type of chaff that they use to make walls. One light bulb hanging in the middle. He has got 10 people.

But then persecution comes. The terrorists get really close to Lima. I mean it is getting scary or, the American missionary goes back to the States and a Peruvian takes his place and the funding is cut off. What happens? This church of 150, 200 people dwindles down to 10. And then what happens? This group over here stays with 10, you see.

So, boy, it looked great, didn't it? Plastered all up, really pretty, everything absolutely beautiful. But when the storm came, there was nothing.

Now let's look at something else that is very, very important. And we will end here.

Make up, cosmetics. Now there is nothing wrong with wearing cosmetics, but there can be something with wearing too much.

A young guy marries a girl and she is just all painted up, just absolutely amazing and the next morning they wake up and he sees her, well, he has a heart attack. I mean, sometimes cosmetics cover up what you are really getting, ok? Women, they don't have to worry about that because they know what they are getting. They see that same ugly face every day with no makeup on it. They look at their husband. "This is what I am getting."

But a husband, that is a different thing.

Now, I want to talk about the cosmetic nature of modern church. Look at it.

"How did service go, pastor, on Sunday?"

"Oh, it was fantastic."

"How is the church doing?"

"Oh, great. This last Sunday we had 750 people. Worship was just absolutely wonderful. People seem to be really up. The sermon just went well. The church is going great."

That is not how you determine how the church is going. Do you know how you determine how the church is going? When everybody goes home and you look at the godliness of that family.

Some of you got in a fight before you even made it to church this morning, didn't you?

You say, “How did you know that? Are you a prophet?”

No, I am married, too.

This one guy was giving a testimony one time. He said they were fighting even in the parking lot. And they made it into church and their face just changed and, boy, she said that worship started and he said, “I raised my hands in the air and all of the sudden my wife just elbowed me right in the side, almost took my breath away.”

Listen to me. People always ask me. I am on... you know, they always ask me, “Brother Paul, how can we pray for you? We know your schedule is so tight you have to travel on so many places. How can we pray for you?”

Pray that I will be a godly husband.

“Well, you have got to go to Asia next week to preach. I thought it would be something...”

No, pray that I would be a godly husband.

“Well, what else?”

Pray that I would be a godly father.

You need a man who is not just concerned about how his church looks—and notice my language—his church. So many pastors are happy if the church looks good on Sunday. It is all cosmetic.

A man who knows that true Christianity is lived out in the context of a marriage and in the context of a family and he is deeply concerned not with a cosmetic Sunday morning service, but with the godliness of the people.

I love theology. I teach theology. I love books on theology and all sorts of things. But do you know what catches my attention? What I strain my ear? Someone gets up and teaches on the trinity, that is absolutely wonderful. But he is probably not going to give me anything new. When a man gets up and teaches on how to be a godly man, how to be a godly husband, how to be a godly father and not some new psychology like different languages of love and all these silly books that are written. No, the Word of God dealing with what God demands of me as a man in a covenant relationship with a woman and where I am wrong and how I am to repent and how I can change. That is what I want to know.

Boy, I just... my ears are just perked up. Why? That is my need. So it is not just about this because this is not the church. And Sunday morning is not representative of how well the church is doing. You need someone who sees through all that.

Because, you see, a pastor who is self centered is going to mainly concern himself with how well the church looks when it gathers together. But the pastor who is truly a shepherd is going to concern himself of how the church looks when it is scattered, when it is in its homes. Do you see that? Healthy marriages, healthy father son, mother son, father daughter, mother daughter relationships. There is a beauty and a Christ likeness.

I am not so much concerned about the presence of God meeting with us in this congregation as I am the presence of God in each individual home. Because if the presence of God is manifested in each individual home, I can assure you the presence of God will be manifested here.

So you can whitewash things. And that is not what you want. To just want wholesome, real simple Christianity. The older I get the more I preach, the more simple it becomes. It really comes down to trust and obey for there is no other way.

And that is what you must be looking for in the life of a man.

I will finish this by saying I was preaching one time out in Texas and after I got done the first sermon that morning the pulpit committee ran up to me. You can always tell the pulpit committee because they have got the fake glasses on with the big nose and the mustache trying to conceal themselves. They pulpit committee ran up and they said, "Would you consider being our pastor?"

And I looked at them with a twinkle in my eye and said, "Are you men out of your mind?"

And they said, "What do you mean?"

I said, "You heard me preach one sermon and you think I qualify as a pastor? You have got to be kidding me. Have you gone down through 1 Timothy chapter three? There is one place there where it says, 'apt to teach' or 'able to teach.' The rest of it has to do with character. You know nothing about my character. You only know I can speak well and I don't need notes. That is all you know. You don't know if I love my wife. You don't know if I disciple my own children. You don't know the integrity of my home."

You see? We always want a guy who is just good right here. I don't need a guy good right here if he is good in his life. I want him to know the Word of God, but let me ask you a question. Would we want Paul the apostle to be our pastor? He didn't speak well, but he had knowledge. He didn't physically look good, but he was spiritually healthy. I can assure you.

So think.

Now if you are here today and you don't know Christ, that is exactly where you are. You do not know Christ.

And you say, “Well, I know him. I just haven’t lived for him for years.”

No, be terrified with that phrase. If you don’t act like you know him, there is a good chance you don’t know him.

I will not tell you, “Peace, peace,” when there is no peace. I will tell you, you can judge a tree by its fruit and you can judge a book by its cover. And if you are not walking with God, you need to be afraid.”

Now I am not going to give an invitation. You know, I don’t give long invitations. I will tell you this. I will stay here all day and counsel you if need be, if you are troubled about your soul. But I will not give 25 verses of *Just as I Am* to manipulate you into some decision that is going to do you no good to start off with.

God has troubled your soul? You come speak with us after, after this message. We won’t worry about going to Denny’s or eating. We will worry about your heart.

Let’s pray.

Father, please work in this congregation. Bless them, Lord. There are people here who love you. Bless them. In Jesus’ name. Amen.