

How are you? Well, all right. I see the coffee is flowing well today. If you have your Bibles, let's go to Acts, chapter 19. Wherever else we go today, keep your finger here. We'll continually come back to this. While you're turning, I need to say something specifically to our family here in Flower Mound. So Denton, Dallas, love you. Just don't know this applies to you. It's becoming very commonplace now for us to turn away from this service.

If you have history here, then this isn't a new announcement for you. If you're new, this has been a problem for seven years, and so, basically, once again, it's becoming routine for us to turn away dozens (maybe even more than that) of people away from this service who are trying to get into this service simply because we don't have the space in this service. Now for where we live, culturally, the predominant place of church attendance is going to be Sunday at the 11 o'clock hour. That's kind of a cultural push when it comes to church attendance, and so here's the favor I need to ask you.

If it's possible... I know some of you are here because this is the only time you can come, so I'm not trying to do a drive-by guilt if you're here in this service if this is the only time you can come. If this is the only time you can come, come and join us. But if you can *not* come to this service but rather come to one of the Saturday night services or the 9:00 a.m. service (and not for a week or two, but you can kind of make that your space), that would benefit us as a community of faith beyond the time I have to communicate how much it would benefit us.

We're fully staffed at every level in all services, so there are preschool and children on both Saturday night services. In fact, my whole family comes to the 7:15. My daughters and sons are in our Little Village and Kids' Village programming here in those hours, and so those are available. If you can make the turn, will you commit to doing that and making that the spot? I know some of you are kind of nomads. You just kind of come whenever the weekend would allow you to come.

But if you could find a "home" in one of our services that isn't necessarily this service, that would be a great benefit to us. Again, I can't say it enough, if this is where you need to come, come. But if this is not where you *need* to come, but it's just where you *like* to come, I'm asking that you would think less of your preference and more of the kingdom, all right? Some of you are like, *Man, he's angry*. We'll, I haven't even started preaching yet. Let's do work.

This is my tenth year as the pastor of The Village Church. When it comes around to December, it'll be officially my 10 years here as pastor. So the first thing I did, the first few weeks, I just kind of felt it out. I just kind of was like, *Okay, how hard can I push and keep this job?* Then once I kind of felt like I figured out where those boundaries were, the first book study we did was the book of Ephesians. We took 20-something weeks and walked through Paul's letter to the church at Ephesus. Just for my curiosity, how many of you were here when I did Ephesians for the first time because I see some of you?

Yeah. We walked through that letter to Ephesus. There were like nine of you who raised your hand. That's how much things have changed over the years, and so loved that book. I have this weekend here where we're rounding out kind of the issue-based sermons we did in January, and then we're heading into Galatians that will take us to the last weekend in June, and so will be a long stint in Galatians. I wanted to take this opportunity to turn our eyes upon some things and, hopefully, let the Holy Spirit kind of do some *correcting* I believe needs to take place and maybe some attention we need to give something we might need as a community of faith to give our attention to.

The thing that sticks out about the church in Ephesus is it's the only church I know of in the Scriptures that you see its birth, its life, and its death. What I want to do is I want to look at its birth, and I want to look at its death, and I want us to look at, really, what we can learn from a church that had far more explosive growth and far more Holy Spirit power than anything we've seen and yet got confused, drifted, and ultimately disappeared. So I want to look at the birth of that church now in Acts, chapter 19.

Let's look at Acts 19. We're going to pick it up in verse 8. I'm skipping the first seven verses simply because of time. Apollos is teaching in Ephesus. He doesn't fully understand the gospel, so Priscilla and Aquila have to pull him aside and help him see all the parts. When Paul gets there, he finds some disciples, and he asks them, "Did they receive John's baptism of repentance, or did they receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit?" Their response was, "What's the Holy Spirit?" That's the answer to the question.

Then Paul lays hands on them. They receive the Holy Spirit, and then, from there, they begin to prophesy, and then we're going to pick it up in verse 8: **"And he entered the synagogue and for three months spoke boldly, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God. But when some became stubborn and continued in unbelief, speaking evil of the Way before the congregation, he withdrew from them and took the disciples with him, reasoning daily in the hall of Tyrannus. This continued for two years..."** Now listen to this: **"...so that all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks."**

So if we're talking just straight church plant, this thing is legit. If we're just talking parachute in... So he's not partnering with the Baptists. He is not connected to the Presbyterians. This isn't some non-

denominational. There is no church in Ephesus. There are no followers of Jesus Christ, and so Paul comes in with the intent to plant a church, raise up men to run that church, and then to head on to whatever's next for him. Within two years, the Bible tells us, "There was no one in Asia who had not heard the word of the Lord, not among the Jews, not among the Gentiles." They had all heard the word of the Lord. Now that's lights out. If that was one of our church plants, I mean, we're continuing to fund this cat, all right? He is doing well.

Now I want to show you how deep the gospel penetration went into Ephesus. We're going to go to 21. I'm not skipping 11 through 20. We will come back, but for now, let's go to verse 21: **"Now after these events..."** The ones we just skipped that are awesome, that we will get to. **"Now after these events Paul resolved in the Spirit to pass through Macedonia and Achaia and go to Jerusalem, saying, 'After I have been there [Jerusalem] I must also see Rome.' And having sent into Macedonia two of his helpers, Timothy and Erastus, he himself stayed in Asia for a while.**

**About that time there arose no little disturbance concerning the Way. For a man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Artemis, brought no little business to the craftsmen. These he gathered together, with the workmen in similar trades, and said, 'Men, you know that from this business we have our wealth. And you see and hear that not only in Ephesus but in almost all of Asia this Paul has persuaded and turned away a great many people, saying..."** Listen to how crazy Paul is. **"...that gods made with hands are not gods."**

Now I love Demetrius. I want to have him to my house for dinner. Because one of two things just happened: Either he legitimately believes when he is making these silver images, he is making a god, or he thinks he just got busted by Paul. Either way, he is undeterred from continuing on his course of action. I don't know which is crazier. He either thinks that when he is hammering silver into shape, he is building a god...

Just for the record, how powerful is a god if you made it? If you can manipulate it and make it, how could it possibly be God? How tiny and weak is your god if your god is dependent upon you? This is Paul's argument earlier in Acts 17 when he says, "God is not made by any. He is not served by any human hands, as though he needed anything. He gives breath and life to all." It's a very subversive attack on the idolatry in Athens and Ephesus. Now let's keep reading.

Verse 27: **"And there is danger not only that this trade of ours may come into disrepute..."** Well, yeah, because it's disreputable. You're lying. **"...but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis may be counted as nothing, and that she may even be deposed from her magnificence, she whom all Asia**

**and the world worship,"** except that large contingency of people he already referenced who are no longer worshipping Artemis. You see what sin does? It kind of blinds you, and then makes you foolish.

Verse 28: **"When they heard this they were enraged and were crying out, 'Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!' So the city was filled with the confusion, and they rushed together into the theater, dragging with them Gaius and Aristarchus, Macedonians who were Paul's companions in travel."**

Now I'll just stop, and I want to spend some time kind of unpacking what has occurred because, really, we've seen something here that I don't know of any other church or any other time in Christian history that the gospel has so penetrated a singular city.

What just happened in Ephesus is Paul has proclaimed the Word of God, and the Spirit of God has moved in such a way that people who are making money off of sinful gain are no longer making money off of sinful activities. The whole socioeconomic climate of Ephesus has, by the gospel, been turned on its head so that if you were in a line of business that made money off of lying, cheating, exploiting, you were no longer able to make money, and so those who made money off such things rioted against the gospel. You can go to the Great Awakenings 1 and 2, and you can look at some things like that, but I don't know of any other place where the gospel so affects a city or a ministry.

Can you imagine? I mean, if we just thought about this in the metroplex. If the gospel had so penetrated, if the Word of God had gone out so forcefully by the power of the Holy Spirit that there's no longer money to be made off of things like strip joints or escorts. There wasn't any money to be made. There was no clientele for it because the Word of God had so transformed the hearts of lives of men and women. It's hard to even imagine, isn't it? It almost feels impossible. It almost feels impossible, and yet here we are in Ephesus.

You can follow the church Ephesus throughout the pages of the New Testament because there's so much written to the church and for the church. You have the letter to the Ephesians written by Paul, when he was in prison, back to this church he planted, okay? Then Timothy is an elder at Ephesus, and so Paul writes to Timothy in 1 and 2 Timothy, talking with him about the church, and what he is writing about, "Here's what you should do. Here's how you should lead the church." He is writing about Ephesus, and John (1, 2, and 3 John) is also written from John, an elder, to the church at Ephesus.

So staff-wise, this church is varsity. I love our staff, but here's the deal: We *exegete* Scripture. John *wrote* Scripture. Now that's different, right? When I say, "Jesus said," and I point you to Scripture. When John is saying, "Jesus said," he is literally saying, "When Jesus said this to me. Like, when we were walking together and he spoke, here's what he said." That's different, man, and so you have this great attention to this church, this strong leadership, and there are not a lot of huge alarms that go off as you read those

letters. There are some warnings in the book of Ephesians. There are some warnings in 1 and 2 Timothy. There are some warnings in 1-3 John, but there's nothing that makes you, *Man, this church is in a lot of trouble.*

But then we read in Revelation, chapter 2... Now keep your finger there in Acts. We're coming right back. Revelation, chapter 2, starting verse 1: **"To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: 'The words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands.'"**

Because of time, I'll simplify that. That's Jesus. Verse 2: **"I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false. I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name's sake, and you have not grown weary."**

Now I just want to stop there and, like Jesus, commend this church because here's what we hear is happening in Ephesus: They are enduring, and they're enduring patiently, and they're not growing weary in their patient endurance. Now if I can be straight, I feel like, if I look at the close to 20 years I have followed Jesus Christ, I have endured well, but I have not always endured patiently, and I have not always endured without getting weary from enduring. Anyone else?

There have been times I have endured because I don't have a say. If I could get out, I would get out. If there was an Easy Button, I would smack that mug, all right? I would want out, but it wasn't my call, and so I endured patiently because there wasn't another route, because I didn't have a say. I'll tell you, in that endurance, I wasn't always glad to be enduring. So not only did I lack patience, but I also grew weary in enduring.

I wanted the enduring aspect to stop, and I wanted just the joy of the Lord to be my fuel and to be that propelling force in my life. There have been seasons in my own journey where it felt dry, where I felt like I was praying and had to really exercise my faith muscles to just trust he was there, trust he was here, rely on the promises in the Word of God and really trust God is who he says he is. I read about these guys and women in Ephesus, and I'm really kind of blown away that this is said.

You have two big components: They endure well, and they have great theology. They have great doctrine. They know the Word. According to this text, they're able to spot false teachers, which means they can hear somebody teach and go, "That doesn't line up with the teachings of Christ. You are obviously not an apostle." They don't put up with liars when it comes to doctrine, so they're theologically sound, and they endure well.

Then we get to verse 4. I mean come on, man, I would join this church if I could, but then verse 4 happens. **"But I have this against you..."** Have you ever been in a conversation like this: *Man, I love you. You're so generous with people. You're such a good guy, so glad you're my friend, but...?* Right? That's exactly what just happened. Look at 4: **"But I have this against you that you have abandoned the love you had at first. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent."**

Now this is a heavy text, and we have to do a little bit of work because here's what just happened: Doctrine alone and endurance alone is not exactly what Christ is after because he says, "I have this against you. Yes, you have truth right. Yes, you endure well, but here's what I have against you: You have abandoned the love you had at first," and then he tells them to do two things. One is to repent of that, abandoning that love, and two is to get back to doing the things you did at first.

Now let me tell you why we have to do a little bit of work with that sentence. We have to do a little bit of work with that sentence because here's what we know to be true: God's affection for us, love for us, and forgiveness of us is not predicated upon anything we do or don't do, but rather in the person and work of Jesus Christ. So when he engages Ephesus and says, "You have abandoned the love you had at first. Repent, and get back to doing what you did at first."

What he is saying, then, is, "If you'll remember back to what you did and you'll do those things, that affection, that love you had for me, not that I have for you because my love for you is built on Christ, but your love for me will be restored." Then you have this scary word of warning. "If you don't, if all you are is doctrinally correct, and you beat your chest and boldly stand in endurance on those principles and on those truths, but you have no affection for me, you have no love for me, no desire for me, I'm pulling the lampstand. I'm shutting this thing down. I am removing the power of the Holy Spirit. I am removing my presence, and I'll continue to save and do work as I choose to save and do work, but it will not be through you."

That's a pretty terrifying threat. I haven't emailed back and forth with the church at Ephesus, so it appears they didn't heed this advice, but there are some real pointed things you need to hear here. Although he commends them for sound doctrine, it appears sound doctrine that does not lead us to a deeper love for Jesus Christ, and his grace isn't enough. He's all about endurance and enduring, but enduring that is not leading to a greater love and affection for Jesus Christ is not what Christ came and died for.

The million-dollar question, at this point, has to be... *What did they do at first that we can look at and go, "That's how our affections are stirred for Jesus Christ"?* Because according to this text, affections matter. Now when I say *affections*, don't go to just emotion. Don't go, "When we sing songs, you have to do

cartwheels up front and scream and shout and get your hands up." That's not where I'm going because it has been my experience that some of the deepest affections are sometimes quiet. There's a real *seriousness* to some affections. That's not to say there's not a place for cartwheels. There's definitely a place for cartwheels, but ultimately this is talking about a *stirring of the spirit* towards the things of God.

To answer that question, we head back to Acts, picking it up in verse 11: **"And God was doing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul, so that even handkerchiefs or aprons that had touched his skin were carried away to the sick, and their diseases left them and the evil spirits came out of them."** Hey, I want some of that. I want to see that here, and I'm not saying that to be funny. I mean if this is what God does, if this is what the Holy Spirit does, if this is available at some level, we would be fools not to be hungry for this. Let's keep going.

**"Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists..."** I just love that that's a job. **"Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists undertook to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits..."** So follow the story. They're watching Paul operate in an unbelievable amount of power. He is not just praying for the sick. He is not just commanding the sick to not be sick. Literally, handkerchiefs and aprons, things that had just touched him were driving out evil spirits and healing people.

These itinerant Jewish exorcists see this. They want in on the action, and so they find a demon-possessed guy and... Look at this. **"...saying, 'I adjure you...'"** It's a very polite way to speak to a demon. **"...I adjure you by the Jesus whom Paul proclaims."** Now 14 is where we get into the story. **"Seven sons of a Jewish high priest named Sceva were doing this. But the evil spirit answered them, 'Jesus I know, and Paul I recognize...'"** What does the demon say next? **"...but who are you?"** You know what I mean? You don't think there's this *Oh, no!* moment?

So one man, seven itinerant Jewish exorcists, who all happen to be brothers (apparently a family business), find a demon-possessed guy and adjure the demon in the name of Jesus, who Paul uses, and the demon answers, "Oh, I know Jesus," and I love the next line. "...and I have heard of Paul." Paul is so wrecking shop in Asia that the demons are like, "Oh, yeah, we've heard of that guy. We've heard of that cat," and then the *uh-oh* moment, "But who are you again?"

Now look what happens next: **"And the man in whom was the evil spirit leaped on them, mastered all of them and overpowered them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded."** That's in the Bible! I didn't make that up! You read that! I didn't make that up! If you've ever seen a fight, there's always (and I've said this for years) debate on who won and who lost the fight.

As a general rule, if when the fight started you had pants on, and when the fight was over you were no longer wearing pants, no one is arguing you won that fight. No one is saying, "Well, he had him in a chokehold for a second." They would just go, "He left naked. He came in with drawers. When all was said and done, he was bleeding everywhere, and his drawers were gone." And that's what happened here, man. You can't make this up. So I'm telling you, read the Bible slowly. It's spectacular.

Now look what happens in 17 because remember what we're trying to do. What we're trying to do is find what the church at Ephesus did at first that Jesus said stirred their affections for Jesus so their affections were informed by doctrine, but ultimately their ultimate love was Jesus, not truth, but that Jesus himself was the truth they loved. Are you tracking with that? Hopefully, I can flush that out more as we start to work on this.

**Verse 17: "And this became known to all the residents of Ephesus, both Jews and Greeks. And fear fell upon them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was extolled. Also many of those who were now believers came, confessing and divulging their practices. And a number of those who had practiced magic arts brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted the value of them and found it came to fifty thousand pieces of silver. So the word of the Lord continued to increase and prevail mightily."**

What we have happening is Jesus *flexing* over Ephesus. I mean I don't even know how else to say it. Just literally flexing over this city so disease, the demonic, wickedness is literally being forced to the edges, so much so that even other religious persuasions are looking at that and acknowledging there's a power in that they do not possess, and they're trying to join into that without submitting their lives to Christ. They want the benefits of Jesus without submitting their lives to Jesus, and they try that, and they get beat, naked, and bloody.

A *holy fear*, not oh-no-he-is-going-get-us fear, but a holy fear covers the city, and the church...hear this (this is the first thing)...*extols the name of Jesus*. They make much of, they exalt, they point out, they... Here's what necessary for you to extol the name of Jesus: For you to extol the name of Jesus, to make much of the name of Jesus, to worship Jesus, you need to know who Jesus is, because what you think about Jesus informs your worship of Jesus.

I said, in the first sermon of January, one of the big barricades to prayer is we have a hard time imagining Jesus delights in us. We think he is kind of patiently putting up with us until we get to heaven and quit being morons, but that's not what the Bible says about Jesus. In fact, if we watch Jesus walk and interact with men and women, he's full of grace and compassion.

Think of the woman at the well who had had five husbands and was currently exchanging sex for rent. Think about Zacchaeus who had purchased the right from Rome to raise money for an occupying, brutal regime in the Romans. Think about how gently and graciously he dealt with them. He was not put off. In fact, he said, "Zacchaeus, you come down for I'm going to your house today," didn't he? "I'm coming to your house."

Now that doesn't sound like, "Get your stuff put together, son, and then you and I can talk. In all of this thievery and all of this wickedness... Get down. I'm eating at your house. I'm coming to you. I'm coming after you," and they sat at that dinner, and in response to Jesus' unflinching love, despite his rebellion, Zacchaeus was transformed, and he said, "I'll give all that I've taken and more."

The woman caught in adultery, the law says she was to be killed; she was to be pelted with stones until she died. What was Jesus' response to the accusation? She was guilty according to the law. That was what should occur. What was Jesus' response? "Let the one of you who is without sin throw the first stone," and then from oldest to youngest, they dropped their rocks and left. Jesus' response then, "Has no one condemned you, woman? Neither do I. Now go and sin no more."

See when you look upon, gaze upon, meditate upon who Christ is and what Christ has done, it becomes easy to exalt and extol his name. But if you see him wrongly, if you don't quite get his righteous life, if you don't get that he went to the cross and paid the price for you, if you don't get that he was resurrected, showing you've been set free from all that binds you in him, then it becomes very difficult to worship him.

If you believe Christ is your enemy, if you believe Christ is trying to rob from you, if you believe, ultimately, Christ came to bring rules, rules you find a very difficult time obeying, you're not going to extol the name of the Lord. You're not going to worship Jesus, so it becomes imperative for our affections that we feed our affections with facts about Jesus.

If we go back to what is being said in Revelation, chapter 2, they loved truths about Jesus, but those truths about Jesus did not lead them to love Jesus himself. It would be the equivalent of me saying, "Man, I love my wife's blue eyes, but man, she gets on my nerves. I love my wife's blue eyes, but really, I would rather not talk with her. If she could just look at me, and I could look at her blue eyes, that would be awesome. Other than that, I really can't stand her, but love those blue eyes."

He is moving them past truth and into truth that leads to an extolling of the Lord, a worship of the Lord in light of who he is, in light of what he has done. This is why the Word of God it is so important. It informs you of who Jesus Christ is, and not the Jesus Christ that's in your mind. All of us are guilty of creating a Jesus that's different than the Jesus of the Bible. We let the Word of God inform our Jesus, and then we meditate

on it, and we stay on it, and we think about it, and we let it build up in us so we might extol his name. But that's not all they're doing. They're extolling his name, but then look what happens next. Are you still there? Remember I said, at the beginning, you stay there, so let's look at what happens next.

Verse 18: **"Also many of those who were now..."** What? Are you guys not there? Okay. Denton and Dallas, thank you if you were with me. Flower Mound is behind. Started out so strong with the coffee crew over here, and then it just went quiet. Verse 18: **"Also many of those who were now..."** What? **"...believers came..."** Listen. **"...confessing and divulging their practices."**

Now I want to stop there because here's the beauty at Ephesus. Ephesus is blowing up, but here's my favorite thing about it: It's *gritty*. I mean it is *gritty* in that these are people...now look right at me...who don't know how to pretend yet. They don't know how to pretend. They don't know how to play that game. They don't know how to go, "I'm fine," when they're not fine. They're coming, and they're divulging their practices. They are confessing to one another where they have fallen short.

Now these two things, an *extolling of the name and renown of Jesus Christ* and *the confession and divulging of our practices*, are woven together in a fabric that can't be torn. Where you understand that God is aware of all of your sinful rebellion and has loved you anyway, you have been set free to not pretend you're more than you are. If you don't get Jesus, like you don't get that he knows, you don't get that all the thoughts of your mind, all the desires of your heart are known by him, and he loves you anyway...you don't get that...you will be forced to pretend you're more than you are, and that's exhausting. It's exhausting.

There's this weird thing that happens in church life, all churches everywhere, it doesn't take you long to put on the "clothes" of the church you worship at. You understand what I'm saying? I'm not talking about how we dress, because we're all over the map here. I'm saying it doesn't take long to go, "Oh, I need to have my Bible. It probably needs to be in ESV. I need to have a journal, take some notes. I need to learn certain phrases: *It's okay to not be okay, gospel-centered, worship, community service*. I need to learn phrases.

I need to learn at what part of the song we raise our hands. I need to learn...*Do I pat my chest? When do I do the pat-chest thing?* Then to begin to mimic the actions of a congregation and, in so doing, to compare yourself spiritually with the Joneses to where you measure up, and where you feel you're not measuring up, you just pretend that you are, and so you tend to regurgitate truth rather than walk in it.

Now this afternoon, at all of our communities, we will be doing Group Connect, and let me tell you why we're so passionate about Group Connect. In reality, God has created not just *persons* but a *people*. You tracking with that? So he comes in, Genesis 12, and says, "I'm going to make all things new. I'm going to

redeem all things to myself," and he forms Israel through Abram. Pentecost happens. Holy Spirit falls, and he creates the church.

What that means is we are aware of grace in our salvation, but the practice of grace occurs in community as we are fully known and, in being fully known, loved anyway. See it's hard to walk in grace if nobody knows who you are, hard to walk in grace if you're harboring and hiding secret sin, hard to walk in and experience grace if you're not willing to take the risk of being fully known. See you get to walk in grace, in community, when you are fully known and, in being fully known, are loved anyway. The more you refuse to do that, the less an experience of grace you'll walk in.

You want to know why we're always constantly pushing, constantly pointing, constantly going, "Get there," constantly, "It has to get smaller than this. This isn't enough. You simply coming and sitting in our crowd isn't enough"? The reason we're honest: It is hard to find that type of community, but it must be fought for. The reason, I'll tell you, some of you don't want to do it...because it's risky. I'll acknowledge it is risky. Could you experience something other than grace? Yeah. That's a real possibility. What I am saying to you, though, is the reward far outweighs the risk. For *grace* to not be a word you know but to be something you get to walk in with other people is profoundly transforming to our journey with Jesus Christ.

*They divulge their practices.* Listen. Pretending to be more than you are is exhausting. It is a ridiculous game. It's the equivalent of when you try to play hide-and-go-seek with your kids, them just laying on the floor and pretending, since they can't see you, you can't see them. Really, you think you're fooling God? Now you know you're not, so that must mean it's enough for you to just know you're fooling us. That is a ridiculous hobby.

Get a boat. Seriously. Wakeboarding is far more fun than that and probably less painful because the game of pretending withers the soul. Then that's not all they're doing. Let's keep going here. By the way, I want to point out their practices and the information they're divulging, they're not kind of run-of-the-mill stuff. It's not, "Hey, you know, I got really angry with my wife, and I said some things I didn't mean." It's witchcraft and those kind of things they're divulging. I mean, think of the confession of that.

It's not coming in and going, "You know, the missus and I had an argument this week." It's, "Man, my neighbor, Bill, there's this strip of grass, and it's his to mow, and he'll never mow it. My yard looks great, and then this part of the yard looks horrible, and so I killed a goat and put a curse on his family. I just want to come clean about that. I don't feel great that I did that, all right? His daughter is sick right now. I think that's probably a demon I put on her. Please, I need help. Walk with me in this."

So don't think, *Well, my sin is so grotesque, there's no way I could ever come clean*, and I know some of you are lying to yourselves right now going, *Man, if I come clean about the things I have done, if I come clean about where I've been, there are going to be so many people who are disappointed. It's going to cause... I mean the whole fabric of the kingdom might unravel.*

Here's the way I would push you: It's been my experience in the group I run with that my weaknesses do far more to push us into holiness than my strengths have done. When I come clean, it creates an environment of, *This is okay to come clean here*, but if I'm always, "Well, you know, I was memorizing Psalm 8, and then after that, I shared the gospel with my neighborhood, and then after that, just went looking for more people to share the gospel with. I was fasting as I did all of that. How was y'all's week?" That tends to be a bit stifling to people, right?

Then for some of you, if we can... I mean, we can. There's nothing you can do. I mean, you can get up and leave right now, but ultimately, here's where I would encourage most of us: Most of us don't have, at this point, some real dark side that's external to us. It's far more internal to us, and so it's our hearts. It's the thoughts of our minds. It's our desires that we have to stay really tapped into so we can be honest about those so it doesn't grab a foothold in our lives.

I'll unpack it like this: For me, there have been times I have acted the correct way, the way I know the Word of God would say I'm supposed to act, but my heart wasn't in it. Anybody else? There have been times I know I need to respond a certain way, so I will respond the way I know I'm supposed to respond even though my heart has another response it would like to give.

Then I've had some of our elders or some of the staff just come in and try to, you know, "Hey, thanks for the humility you showed on that." I'm like, "Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa. So let me just be straight. Let me be honest. I responded the way I know the Word of God wants me to respond. My heart is not there. I want an octagon and a choke-out. That's what I want right now. So don't be patting me on the back. That's not where I am."

That's what I mean by being *tapped into your heart* so you're able to not take praise that doesn't belong to you, so you're dialed in at such a level that you know you're in desperate need of Jesus. Quit comparing your lives to other morons around you. Compare it to the holiness of God, and you'll see just how deeply you need Jesus Christ, which will lead to more extolling of his name.

That leads us to the last piece, an *extolling of his name, confess sin, and divulging of practices*, and then look at 19: **"And a number of those who had practiced magic arts brought their books together and**

**burned them in the sight of all. And they counted the value of them and found it came to fifty thousand pieces of silver. So the word of the Lord continued to increase and prevail mightily."**

The last piece in stirring up our affections for Jesus is to gaze upon Jesus so we *extol his name, to be honest about where our hearts are in regards to confession and the divulging of practices*, and then this last piece, the last thing we see the church at Ephesus is doing at the beginning, that Christ is saying, "Remember these things," is they're very *serious about sin*. I'm not for book burning. That's not where we're going. I'm not going, "Hey, grab your televisions. All rights? Meet me in the parking lot. Let's burn these mugs down." That's not where we're going. What you can see here is a *seriousness* about holiness that has led them to action. They're not passive about their sin.

I said, about eight weeks ago, my big concern for us as a church is not that we would over-preach grace because that's impossible. If we had all the words in every language on earth, you wouldn't be able to preach enough the grace and mercy of God found in Jesus Christ. My concern isn't that we would over-preach grace because I believe that's impossible. My concern is that in the good, right preaching of grace, you might get confused and think grace makes sin safe, and it doesn't. It doesn't.

So we might *know Jesus and extol his name*, we might *be honest about where we have fallen short* (either mind, heart, or action), and we might *take sin very seriously* in our lives. Maybe not sin that's there, but sin that's a potential. All of us have inequity. All of us have a bent. All of us are prone to certain wonderings, and so what is being described in Revelation, chapter 2, pushing us to Acts 19, is something that can be found all over the Bible, and it's (I think the Puritans called) *vivification* and *mortification*.

Here's what that looks like: We fix our eyes on Jesus, and we meditate upon Jesus, and we think on him and dwell on him and are in conversations about him. We sing about him and sing to him and walk with others, where he is the basis of our relationship until our affection for him outweighs our desire and affection for anything that would be rebellious to him. While our affection, our minds, our vitality are set there, we still are aware of this, and we set up obstacles and barricades that this would have to cross to get to us. We don't welcome it in and go, "Hey, don't get me in the back while I look at Jesus." Okay? That's not what we do. We're violent towards our sin because we understand what is at stake.

If you think of Colossians 3:1-10, the first four verses are, "Set your minds on Jesus. Set your minds on things that are above where Christ is." It's this idea of thinking on him, dwelling on him, and then verse 5 turns it: "And put to death, therefore, that which is in you that is of below, that is earthly, that is fleshly. Put that to death." So yes, let's focus on Jesus. Yes, let's confess, but let's also be very violent against the sin that wars against us and would draw us away.

I love Jesus Christ. I have strong affections for Jesus, but there are still rules in my life I live by. I'm free in those rules, but I can tell you I never travel alone ever. My wife goes with me. One of our pastors goes with me. I am never alone on the road. Is that because I think I'm going to slip up and hook up with a "woman of the night"? No, I don't think that's going to happen. I don't think if I'm in the parking lot and somebody offers me black tar heroin, I'm going to go, *Should I do this? Here are the pros. Here are the cons. No thank you. Thank you, bro. Maybe some other people in there.*

No, I don't think that's going to happen, but I know the Enemy is conniving. He has been at this longer than I have, and so he is not only going to have to get past my affections, but he is going to have to get past some other things in my life. I can, before you and before the Lord, tell you I don't have a pornography problem, but I have covenant eyes on every one of my devices. Why? Because it's available, and who knows? As I send my affections upon him, I am serious about him not getting a foothold in my life, him not wiggling in.

The elders have our finances available to them as the Chandler family, so at any moment, they can go, "Hey, bring your books in," and I'll gladly bring my books in. I have to be very careful there's never a discrepancy between who I am right here and who I am out there, and so I've tried to build barricades into my life with barbed wire and machine gun turrets against the Enemy, who would love to destroy me, who would love to destroy you.

My question is...*Are you pursuing an affectionate relationship with Jesus Christ while simultaneously confessing and divulging practices while simultaneously building a defense against your inequities?* Because the Bible says when these three things are clicking, the overflow of the heart and affections towards Jesus is what occurs. I'm not concerned about doctrinal drift here, to be straight with you. Our elders are pretty ferocious about that.

In fact, if you've ever sat through one of our membership classes, you know we're like, "This is what we believe. If you love that, if you believe the Bible says that, come on in. Be a part of the family. If this is not where you land, we love you. You're probably a brother and sister in Christ, but you probably need to find some other place to worship, because this is where we land."

So we're pretty ferocious when it comes to doctrine, as we're in glad submission to what God has revealed about himself in the Word of God. We'll protect that unity, fight for that unity, and we believe in that, but I do believe in an environment like that, truth can be exalted beyond the One who is truth. The next thing you know you love doctrine, but you don't love Jesus the way you love that doctrine about Jesus. What happens when that takes place? You become graceless, loveless. You begin to lack patience with others.

Your message ceases to be the love and mercy of Jesus Christ and begins to become whatever doctrine you've pinpointed as the fulcrum upon which everything rests.

I want to remind you of Revelation 2. Doctrine is important. Theology is important, but it's only important inasmuch as it informs us and fuels our love and passion for Jesus. That works itself out as we love and patiently walk with others inside the family and outside the family. My prayer is God would make us that kind of church. Let's pray.

I want you to answer a couple of questions for you as we move into a time of extolling the name of Jesus through singing songs to him, about him: *How are you feeding your affections for Jesus? Are you? Do you have any affection for Jesus right now? How serious are you about your sin? When was the last time there was any confession that came out of you?*

John, an elder at Ephesus, in 1 John, chapter 1, says, "If you say there is no sin in you, you lie." Do you think that was a hint towards the Ephesians of where we find ourselves now in Revelation, chapter 2? There is sin in you. When was the last time you've acknowledged that before God and before others? How serious are you about the sin in your life? Are you fighting it, or are you passive?

After we extol the name of the Lord, after we extol the name of Jesus through song, maybe you'll need to grab the hand of a friend or a family member, or maybe come up front or to the back, depending on what community you're worshipping with today, and maybe just confess you're in a dry season. Maybe repent you don't have any affection for the Lord. Maybe confess, for the first time in a long time, maybe acknowledge you have given refuge to sin and have not taken putting sin to death seriously.

Holy Spirit, help us. I pray you would stir our affections for you. I pray, just as your Word bore weight on us today, you would remind us and drive us to your feet, you would fill our hearts, flood our hearts with the joy that comes from knowing you are good, and you do good, and you've rescued us, and you've set us free from the chains of religion and irreligion. You have purchased us, and you call us your own by your blood. We thank you for that, and it's for your beautiful name, amen.

I love you.