

What Kind of Church Do We Want to Be? (Part 2)

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[0 : 0 0] If you have your Bibles, turn with me to 1 Thessalonians chapter 3. We're beginning, or continuing, I should say rather, our series. We started last week's three-part series about what kind of church do we want to be.

Let me go back for those of you who weren't here last week and just kind of set the stage. I'll do that very, very briefly. Paul is on his second missionary journey. He is in Philippi and he leads the Philippians to the Lord.

Suffers great persecution, has to flee the city, goes ultimately to Thessalonica. There in Thessalonica, he shows up at the synagogue and he begins to preach. And he does that for three consecutive Sabbaths as they gather for worship.

A number of those people hear the gospel, respond in faith to what he said. And they establish friendships and they begin growing in their faith. Three weeks, though, after his arrival, suddenly persecution is about to take off in Paul's life in the church.

Some of the folk who have come to be a part of this church, they come to Paul and they say, Paul, you need to flee for your life. And so he flees and he goes to the next city.

[1 : 1 2] And as we read in 1 Thessalonians, he desires to get back to them because he's concerned about them. He wonders what's happening to them. Have they continued in the faith they have first embraced or have they fallen by the wayside?

And so he'd make several attempts to go back. And he says in these first two chapters that Satan continually hinders him from being able to go back. So in chapter 3, verse 1, when he says he can stand it no longer, he's just beside himself, worried about these folk, he sends Timothy, says, Timothy, leave me, go back and check on those folk in Thessalonica.

He goes and checks on them. When he comes back, you read about that in verses 6 through 10 of the third chapter. And basically what he finds is this. These folk are doing fine, even in the absence of leadership.

These people are growing in their faith. They're loving one another the way they should. And so Paul, in chapter 3, verses 11 to 13, that's the portion of this that we're using as our focus during this three-week study.

Paul prays a prayer to these Thessalonians. And the first part we looked at last week. Today we look at the second part, the middle part. What he says in that first part is this.

[2 : 2 4] I'm praying that you will increase in your love. Timothy's told me you're loving one another, but increase in that. In fact, increase to the point that it overflows, that it spills over in everything you do.

And then he gives them explicit instructions. He says, I want you to love those in the church, but also those outside the church. And we talked about what that looked like. In fact, the telltale sign, the badge of discipleship for all believers, should always be our love for folk around us.

Those who we know, those who are in the faith, those who are a part of the family of God, but also those who are opposed to us. Those are our enemies. Those are our neighbors. Those who don't walk with Christ.

We're to be known as a church that loves. And I really hope and trust and believe that's what you here at First Baptist Pickens want to do. You want to emulate what it is to love the Lord Jesus Christ and thereby love the world.

Well, he goes on in the middle of that next verse. Look at verse 13. He prays this prayer as well. May he make your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father.

[3 : 35] May he make your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father. Let's just be honest about it for a moment.

Years and years ago, we heard a lot about holiness, right? Most of you who were born in the 40s, the 50s, the 60s, you went to church and you heard a whole lot about holiness.

Have you noticed how in the last several decades we've moved away from talking about holiness? In fact, if we're just absolutely honest about it, that's a word we kind of shy away from in all walks of life.

If your middle schooler shows up tomorrow and the other middle schooler looks at them and says, hey, there's old Holy John. There's Holy Jane. There's Holy Sally.

They're not usually perceiving that to be a compliment, right? And in fact, if you own your job as adults, go in the marketplace, and you overhear people talking, more often than not, sometimes they can say it complimentary.

[4 : 38] But more often than not, when that word arises in the marketplace, they're not using it in a complimentary fashion. And so we kind of shy away from it.

But I want to tell you something. In the church, we need holiness and purity as much as flowers need sunshine and rain. And you can never be pleasing unto God and be the church that God intends for you to be unless your life is marked by what Dietrich Bonhoeffer called an inner, hidden holiness of the heart.

I'm not talking about a holiness that you wear on your sleeve. I'm not talking about a holy roller, so to speak. I'm talking about a real, genuine, pure, hidden holiness that emerges.

Folk can see it, but you don't wear it on your sleeve. So I want to just mention a few things about this prayer he prays here.

Let's look at it again. May he make your hearts blameless in holiness before our God. This is going to scare you, but I'm going to say about 13 things about that, okay? We're not going to be here all afternoon.

[5 : 47] I'm going to say them just in real staccato fashion. In fact, I'm going to read several of them and then make just a brief comment. But let's just begin. Here's the first. The end result is that they be holy and blameless before the Lord with the underscoring of the word be.

The emphasis on the word be. That's what his ultimate goal is for these believers in Thessalonica. Not that they act holy, that they be holy.

And there's a difference in those two things, right? We've seen folk act holy and then we've seen folk be holy. You've seen folk who give off the image, they're as pure as the new driven snow.

And then you see people in their speech patterns, in their thought patterns, in their lifestyle. Boy, they live a life that is pure. Second thing I want you to say is this.

On our own, we are neither holy nor blameless. I don't want to burst your bubble this morning, but there's a lot wrong with all of us. Do you know that? Have you ever noticed that?

[6 : 56] Have you ever taken just self-inventory and a long, close look at yourself? You're no prize, right? I mean, I'm certainly not. I would readily admit that about myself.

I'm just no prize. There's a lot about me that's wrong. I've sinned many, many, many times in my life. And I just want you to know, a lot of us in the church give off to the world that when we became a Christian, we just perfected ourselves.

That we're just not like you because you have sin in your life. Let's just be straight about it today. Most of us sin just about every day of our lives.

Do we not? In fact, you get behind a slow-moving car on your way to work in the morning, you can sin two or three times before you get to the office, right? A lot of us struggle with sin on an ongoing, daily basis.

If they could hook one of those GoPros on you and see everything that you do in a 24-hour period and hear every word that you speak and read your mind and demonstrate graphically every thought you have.

[8 : 12] Anybody here feel comfortable with us showing that film next week? I didn't think so. Because the truth is we project one image of ourselves, but we know deep down in our heart, mind, and soul, none of us are as holy and pure and righteous as we seem.

Third thing I want you to see is this. He asked God to do this because we aren't capable of doing this on our own. That's his prayer. He doesn't say, may you be holy and blameless.

May he make you holy and blameless. So let me just clue you in on something. You can try all you want to remake yourself, and we all do that from time to time.

In fact, we get that mistaken notion that's what we do when we rededicate our lives to the Lord. We come to the altar, we fall on our knees, and we say, God, I'm going to do better. I'm going to do better. If you're ever going to become holy and blameless before the Lord, you know what's going to have to happen?

God's going to have to do a work in you. Because you can't do that on your own. You've tried that last about three minutes, doesn't it? Isn't that right? And you say, I'm going to do better at this, and then suddenly you don't.

[9 : 29] So if it's going to happen, it's going to happen because God does a work in your life. Fourthly, this process that we're talking about, wherein God does a work of grace in our lives, it is called sanctification.

Big, long theological word. You've seen it in your scripture. It's actually a biblical word. One you might want to write down in your notes in the side of this margin of this verse because that's what he's talking about.

He's saying, I hope God will do a work of sanctification in your life. Now let me tell you about this work of sanctification. It begins at the moment of conversion.

Salvation is an ongoing process. We have been saved, but we are also being saved. And we will be saved. Do you understand that?

Conversion is a one-moment experience. You are converted when you come to know Christ as Savior, not when you come and take a preacher's hand, shake his hand, even sit and pray a prayer that he leads you in.

[10 : 29] You are saved the moment you hear the gospel. It makes sense to you. And you say, I want that. I want God to save me. Before you ever get up out of your seat, before you ever pray a prayer, you are converted the moment you've turned to God in your mind and heart and say, God, I need you.

At that very moment, you're converted. What happens is a miracle. The Holy Spirit of God moves into your life. He takes a person who is dead in their trespasses and sins, and he quickens them, he brings them to life.

They're regenerated and they are saved, born again, any of those terms you want to use at that moment in time. At that moment in time, the Holy Spirit who comes in begins a process in you known as sanctification.

That process of sanctification ends in glorification. You take your last breath. This is a one-time, instant-happening event.

You are made like Jesus. That occurs when you die. Everything from death, physical, to death, spiritual, when you invited Christ into your heart, that's this process we call sanctification.

[11 : 39] The goal of sanctification, the Spirit of God is doing this in your life, Romans 8, 28. He's using everything that occurs, the good, the bad, the ugly, that which you lack to see happen, that which you didn't want to happen.

He's using all those events to mold you and to fashion you into the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. But that doesn't perfectly culminate until your death and you are glorified in the presence of God.

Sanctification is a lifelong process. Sanctification is a lifelong process. Both our hearts, and this is so important, get this, and our habits and our thoughts are being changed.

Some folk think falsely that sanctification is just me changing my habits. But it's not. And some people get the mistaken idea that sanctification is just my mind and heart being changed and it doesn't matter so much about my habits.

And both of those thoughts, that way of thinking, is wrong. Let me just tell you, if our hearts appear to have changed, I've got a new heart, a new spirit about me, but my actions don't, then I've not really genuinely repented.

[13 : 00] And Bonhoeffer, the World War II theologian, Bonhoeffer would say that where there is no real confession and repentance, there's no salvation.

So it's not enough that my heart and mind change, but my actions don't. The evidence that my heart has really changed is that my actions change in the fashion of my heart.

You understand that? The next thing I want to tell you is this. If my habits change, and this is the real danger in many churches, if my habits change but my heart doesn't, our holiness is a mere act.

And I'm more interested in pleasing men than I am in pleasing God. And I want to tell you, I've witnessed that many, many times in churches. Somebody's going through a rough spot in their marriage and they say, this life's not working, I've got to change my ways.

And so they go forward and they say, I want to receive Christ as my Savior. And guess what? They are afraid their marriage is going to end or there's something falling apart in their life. They're afraid of a lot of things. And they say this, I'm going to quit using preparerity.

[14 : 13] And I'm going to quit drinking. And I'm going to quit smoking. All those things that we think about as being sick. I'm going to quit this. I'm going to quit that. And I'll quit doing this. And I'll start going to church. And I'll attend Sunday school.

And I'll give some money to the church. And I'll do all these things. And all their outward habits change. And people say, boy, that guy has cleaned up his life. And he appears to. But the problem is this.

His heart never changed. And he's still just as mean and nasty on the inside as he ever was on the outside before that happened.

And you've seen folk like that, right? You've seen them in church. You just wonder, how can they be a Christian because they do all these good things and they don't do anything morally wrong. But why do they mean as a rattlesnake?

Jesus wasn't mean. Jesus wasn't cruel. Jesus wasn't hurtful. But boy, they're just mean-spirited. And when a man's heart doesn't change, but his outward actions do change, I'm going to tell you something.

[15 : 14] That's a guy who's wanting to impress people and not God. And there's a real problem when that occurs. Genuine holiness. Listen to this.

It is the result of God changing our nature and making our choices, making the choice rather. He is leading us to make in life. That's how sanctification works.

How real holiness works. God changes my mind and heart. And as a result of that, he begins to speak to me, here's how you ought to be living. And so as a desire to please him because I'm grateful for what he's done in my life, I listen to that voice.

I don't rebuke that voice. I don't walk away from that voice. I obey that voice. And I begin as a result to be holy. Sanctification leads to purity.

You need to get this. And not perfection. Sanctification leads to purity, but it doesn't lead to perfection.

[16 : 15] And I want to tell you, sometimes we mistakenly think that in the church and even teach that in the church and communicate to those outside the church. And that's why people who look at the church oftentimes think, what a bunch of phonies and hypocrites.

Because you see, we look at them and we kind of convey this message that I'm just a little bit better than you because I don't smoke and I don't drink and I don't do all these things. And I'm just a cut above you.

But they look at us in those low moments in our life where we give way to that old nature within us and they see us sin and they go, huh, he's just like me.

And you know the message we ought to be communicating to the world all the time? I am just like you. I am just like you. I am a sinner.

I'm capable of everything you're capable of. The difference is this, the grace of God has come into my life and he's forgiven my sin. It's not that I'm a sinner.

[17 : 15] We pretend sometimes to the world that we're not sinners and we are and we all know we are and we ought to be saying that to them. But the message of the gospel is through God's mercy we've been redeemed.

We've been forgiven, right? But any of you perfect in this room? We're not perfect. Sanctification doesn't lead to perfection. Glorification will. But in this life, we're just not perfect.

Genuine purity begins in our hearts. Listen to this. Permeates our minds. Captures our wills and attitude. Flows from our lips. Impacts our choices and treatment of other people.

That's what happens when God begins to do a work in my life. He begins by changing my mind. He permeates my mind. He permeates my heart. It impacts my attitudes and my actions and my speech.

And He takes over every aspect of my life. Genuine purity, this is important, is not simply adhering to dress, speech, or moral codes. It is a response of gratitude and obedience made to please a loving and gracious God.

[18 : 31] one last thing I want to say about this holiness and then I'm going to press on to something else. Unfortunately, many of us are better at acting holy than we are at being holy.

Put the picture on the screen if you will. You recognize that gal? I can remember back when they really made this pretty famous Dana Carvey came up with this skit The Church Lady.

It was on Saturday Night Live. I never saw it. I went to bed early. I would have seen it but I just I couldn't stay up that late and preach on Sunday mornings. But I want to tell you when he came out with that skit it just went in not the way they taught them but now it went viral, right?

Everybody knew The Church Lady and everybody broke up over The Church Lady. Aren't you special? Right? Remember when he did that?

And a lot of church folk got offended by it. I remember the first time I thought of it making fun of the church. And then I began to watch and I tell you something it was funny.

[19 : 50] You know why it was funny? It was funny to Americans everywhere because they have all met The Church Lady. That's right. I don't mean they met Dana Carvey. They met him in real life.

There's one just about in every church. The Church Lady, right? Sometimes it's the church man not the Church Lady. Just as many men out there like that as there are women. But you know what I'm talking about.

They just walk on a little higher plane than all the rest of us, don't they? They're just a little holier. It's not that they always condemn but they just always condescend.

Isn't that right? They're just a little bit up here and you're kind of down here. The deal is it's not that they've mastered the art of holiness or purity.

They've mastered in their mind the art of appearing holy and appearing pure. And you and I both know from real life experience boy there's a real difference in that.

[20 : 55] When you really are pure and holy can I tell you something? You'll be tempted to gossip when you hear the folk in the office place doing that but you'll hear this voice that says that's not Christ-like.

You'll back away from that and you'll be driving down the road and that guy will do that thing that makes you so angry and you'll be tempted to set down the horn or to say something to him that you shouldn't and guess what?

You hear the spirit of God within you and say you know what? That wouldn't be Christ-like. He loved me when I was just crazy as this guy. And you back away from that.

That's the evidence of real purity and holiness is when the spirit of God prompts you and you listen to it and you say I'm not going to go there. You don't jump up and cut off the TV when the pastor knocks at the door and you see him through the glass because you don't want him to see you watching whatever it is you're watching.

You get up when the pastor is not at your front door and you cut off the TV because you know you say to yourself that's just not something I need to see. That's not going to make me more Christ-like.

[22 : 13] You don't need somebody beating you over the head with a list of rules and regulations and saying do this and don't do that and you're okay. When I was a kid you know what Baptists thought by and large?

You couldn't drink. You couldn't smoke. I'm not saying you should do those things now. But this was how we looked at holiness. You shouldn't drink. You shouldn't smoke. You shouldn't curse.

You shouldn't go to the movies. You shouldn't fish on Sundays. You shouldn't eat out. You shouldn't we had a long list of shouldn'ts right? You shouldn't play cards.

You can't do this. I knew a lady one time. She was from another denomination and she was a hairstylist and this pastor's wife who was of that same denomination would come see her on Saturday night and she would say would you trim my hair just a half an inch or an inch get the dead ends off.

Just about every other week she'd do that. Because in that particular denomination at that time they wore their hair way up here. And you know why? I asked one time.

[23 : 27] I was a teenager and I was over at her house and I said why do all you wear it so high? And she said because we're not supposed to cut our hair. And I thought but your hair having your hair cut.

Yeah but not so much anybody can tell. And I'm 17 years old and I'm thinking to myself so it really doesn't matter if you have your hair cut just so nobody tells you have your hair cut.

Right? You see how crazy that is? Now we see that as Baptists because most of us don't wear hair cut and we laugh at it but don't taste it. We do just as stupid things as that.

Where we think we can make ourselves look holy by following this long list of regulations and guidelines. Don't make us holy. You are holy from what comes out of your heart.

You understand that? Because you have a heart for Jesus and you say I want to be obedient to Christ and I don't impure it in my life. It doesn't mean you won't mess up. You will mess up. But you immediately confess it to God and get right with Him again.

[24 : 35] That's what real genuine holiness looks like. I want you to look with me to Thessalonians chapter 4 the very next chapter.

I want to read quickly eight verses. Verses one through eight. Finally then brothers we ask and encourage you in the Lord Jesus that you have received from us. You must walk and please God as you are doing.

Do so even more. For you know what commands we gave you through the Lord Jesus. This is God's will, your sanctification, that you abstain from sexual immorality so that each one of you knows how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor.

Not with lustful desires like the Gentiles who do not know God. This means one must not transgress against and defraud his brother in this matter because the Lord is an avenger of all these offenses as we also previously told and warned you.

For God has not called us to impurity but to sanctification. Therefore the person who rejects this does not reject man but God who also gives you his spirit.

[25 : 45] Paul has prayed two things for these people. That they increase in love and overflow in love because he knows unless you do that the world is not going to believe your testimony.

That's how Jesus lived. That's how you all live as ambassadors of Christ. But then he follows it up by this. You have to authenticate the message you're declaring and the way you do that is by living as holy and pure as Jesus was.

And that's why he prays I pray you will be blameless in holiness when you stand before our God. Now some of you most of you probably won't but some of you will recall I said last week when I began this series I've got two expert witnesses or two expert folk I'm going to bring and let you hear what they have to say about how do you really do church right.

Right. And we've been looking at Paul and Paul says I'm praying that you will increase in love and overflow and I'm praying that you will be holy and blameless. Let's bring up our second expert James.

Remember that? James the pastor of the church in Jerusalem. Now I'm just going to point out one verse that James gives us because it is an incredibly great great great verse.

[27 : 05] If you have your Bibles turn with me to the book of James chapter 1 and let's just read one thing he says in verse 27. You ready?

In fact let's go back and read verse 26 because it ties to it. Verse 26 and 27. Here we go. If anyone thinks he is religious without controlling his tongue but deceiving his heart his religion is useless.

Now listen to what he says. I love this. Pure and undefiled religion. Just look up a minute. Have you ever wondered about that phrase? Pure and undefiled religion. What is true spirituality, true religion really like?

You ever wonder when you go into church? Is this what it really should be? Is this what real spirituality looks like or we convinced ourselves this looks the way it should?

But is it really? Well here's what he says. Pure religion and undefiled religion before our God and Father is this. And guess what? He's going to say two things.

[28 : 08] To look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself unstained by the world. Wow.

Paul says I'm praying for you guys to be two things. To be loving and that you'll be holy. And James says you know what real religion is like?

I mean real true religion cutting all the phony baloney out of it and look at the real heart of the matter. Here's what it is. To take care of widows and orphans. Now why would he say that?

What does that mean? I want to ask you. Who are the most vulnerable people on the planet? Aren't they the youngest and the oldest?

And especially the youngest who have no one to care for them. They're orphans. They've lost their mother and their father. How are they going to support themselves? They don't have a means of income. When you're talking about orphans, you're talking about the most vulnerable, the most in my opinion, vulnerable people on all of God's earth because they're children.

[29 : 14] They can't protect themselves physically, can't protect themselves emotionally, can't protect themselves mentally, intellectually. People can take advantage of them. They don't have a means of support.

James said, you want to know what real religion looks like? That you've got a heart to take care of the orphans. the most easily persecuted, put down, offended people on the face of the earth.

And widows. And who are these widows? Paul's already told us in Timothy, when it comes to widows, you know who you take care of first?

Not all the widows, but the widows who have no children. These elderly ladies or men, as the case might be, who've lost their spouse, and they don't have children.

Who's more vulnerable than that other than these orphans? I mean, folks who are on limited income, they don't have anybody to help them, they're getting older, life's harder, there are more difficulties on them.

[30 : 17] You know what he's saying? He's saying the same thing that Paul said. He's emphasizing that we love one another. I want you to take care of those who others have forgotten, who've cast aside who ostracize, who are the beaten down, the helpless.

He's talking about loving people. True religion is that you lie folk, that you just pour yourself out in loving other folk. Then he says this, and let me add one thing he says, that you keep yourself undefiled, some translations have it, unspotted, other translations have it.

You know the translation I like best because it uses a modern word? Unpolluted. You keep yourself unpolluted from the world. Well, I don't know about you, but that speaks to my heart in the culture in which we're living because I'm going to tell you something.

They're doing everything they can in our culture to pollute our minds and our lifestyles and to tell us that that which God has always said is wrong is right and that which we have said is right is wrong.

Isn't that true? So, James says, boy, you're going to have to be real careful if you're in the church because pure religion is like this.

[31 : 35] You're living in this world. You can't come out of the world. You're in the world. But don't let the world pollute you. Now, how does things get polluted? Either the contaminant enters into that which is pure or that which is pure passes through something that is impure and thereby becomes contaminated.

Factories have these chemicals. They release them into the stream. It gets into the water and the pure water becomes contaminated. Or pure water passes through something, a stream, there's a dead animal and it becomes contaminated.

Or it passes through rusty pipes, red zinc and all that and it becomes contaminated. Right? We're living in the world and the world's doing everything it can to contaminate us and Paul says or James says don't let that happen.

You know what? Same thing Paul said, just a different way of saying it. Be blameless in holiness. I'm going to show you one passage we're going as soon as I read this passage and then I give you one illustration.

Go with me to the last book of the Old Testament, the book of Malachi. Look at chapter 1, verse 6. A son honors his father and a servant his master.

[32 : 48] Look up and just listen a minute. He's just making, Malachi's just making a statement that he knows, everybody knows is universally true. He's saying this to the priest of Judah. He says a man honors his father and a servant honors his master.

We know that. If I am a father, where is my honor? God's talking about himself. That's the reason that pronoun my is capitalized. He says so if I'm your father, why am I not honored?

And then he says, and if I am a master, where is your fear of me? Why don't you fear me? Says the Lord. Yet you ask, the yet's the priest, how have we despised your name?

Can you see these priests? God's indicting them. If I'm your father, why don't you honor me as your father? If I'm your master, why don't you fear me? We do fear you. What do you mean we've despised your name? That's the question they're asking.

How have we despised your name? Verse 7, by presenting defiled food on my altar, you ask, how have we defiled you? And then God responds, when you say the Lord's table is contemptible, and then he gives them an example.

[33 : 57] When you present a blind animal for sacrifice, is it not wrong? And when you present a lame or sick animal, is it not wrong? Bring it to your governor. He says, hey, try that with your governor, your political leaders.

Would he be pleased with you or show you favor? Ask the Lord. Of hosts. He says, you see, you treat me with disrespect.

Because you come to my house, and you say you're coming to worship me and honor me, and guess what you do? You go into your herd of sheep, and you find those sheep that are blind, and you come and say, this will do for God.

It's good enough for Him. And you offer this blind sheep, and you clearly see what the Levitical law called for. It was a sheep without spot or blemish. And you get these sick sheep, or spotted sheep.

And you know that's not kosher. You know you shouldn't be doing that. But we can get away with it. What's God going to say about it, right? Now just pause and put that on hold.

[35 : 04] I invite you to my house. Let's say today for lunch. Okay? You get to my house, and I say to you, what would you like to drink?

You say, I'd like to have water, if that's okay. All right? And I go to the refrigerator, and I pull out this bottle of water. I just got to tell you, there was pure water in there, but I put some contaminants in it.

Okay? Assume that they got there because the bottle was dirty, maybe. But you don't have to be a rocket scientist to look at this and know that's not good water.

Right? Anybody here want a sip of this? I won't tell you what I contaminated it with, but it's contaminated. You just take my word for it, okay? It's contaminated water. So if I set this in front of you and say, here, have this.

You think you'd drink it? You maybe would say, have you lost your mind? Or if you're a real plight, you just say, hmm, I'm not too thirsty. Right?

[36 : 09] And you'd never touch it. And then you see me go to the refrigerator, and I pull out these two bottles of water. And I give one to my wife, and I take one, and you say, well, why didn't he give me that?

Right? So I'm going to tell you, you can have one of these, because they both contain nothing but water. Okay? But I've got to tell you, one of these, I've got little dots on the top.

One of these, I know, is clean, pure water, just the way it was packaged. But the other one is an empty bottle that I filled with water.

Did I tell you how water went out the other day? So I had to fill this with water from my toilet. But now, we keep clean toilets.

It was clean a couple weeks ago. So here's my question to you. You're going to take a chance of guessing which one is contaminated water, because it looks just like the other one.

[37 : 17] It looks exactly like the other one. You won't come and look at it, put it under my scope, see any difference. They're the same. They look the same. But we know this one is real, pure, clean water, and one of them is contaminated water.

And I want to tell you something. Every one of us in this room today, your life's in one of these three shapes. Either you can look at it, and other people can look at it and say, yeah, that guy's not holy.

that's contaminated water. Or, you're like one of these. One looks like the real article, because it's pure and clean, and it's good for you to drink.

But the other, I got news for you, it just looks that way. It's not really clean. But here's what the sad thing is, every week when we come to church, a lot of us, we just put that up there, and we're okay with it, because it looks clean.

I mean, nobody can tell. I can't tell. He's your pastor. I can't tell. Ryan can't tell. You can't tell about us. But I'll tell you, God always knows.

[38 : 36] He always knows. He looks and He knows what's the real deal. Whether there's real holiness and purity, and He knows where it's not. And I'm going to tell you something.

If you want anything for your church in the days to come, you need to be concerned about getting a pastor, but more than anything else, you need to be concerned. We're a church that loves, really, genuinely loves. Let me just say that we really love other people.

And secondly, that we're holy. That we're pure. Not that kind of flashy holiness that you wear on your sleeve, that calls attention to yourself, that says, look at me, how holy I am, but that kind of holiness that results in integrity and character of life and loves people and is honest and is godly and is pure and who does the right thing because it doesn't matter who's looking other than God.

I'm doing this because I know God's looking. And that's all it has to be, just know that He's looking. That's all that matters. So I don't have to brag about the holiness. I don't have to put it on display for anybody.

You don't have to show it off for anybody. Now, of course, if I tell you, asking you this, that kind of holiness you got today. I haven't been here long, but I've been here three months and long enough to know this.

[39 : 53] You're a sweet, wonderful people and I love you. You can believe I'm just saying that. It's the truth. I've told everybody I know I love first pick and if I was a young guy, I'd be putting my name in that pile. I love this church.

But I've come to find this out about you. be demonstrative about what's going on in your life spiritually. And that's okay. That's okay. You don't have to respond to every invitation.

You don't have to go and stand at the altar all the time. But I'm going to tell you what is important. You do business with God. You be honest with God. And you know today which of these two bottles you are.

And if you're that one that looks holy, you're going to pass the test. The eye test. And I'm going to tell you something. You need to be doing some business with God right now because if you want your church to be the church it needs to be, you need to be people who genuinely are holy.

And I don't know that about you anymore than you know it about me. I could be a fake and a phony and you wouldn't tell it just by listening to me preach. But you know about you and I know about me and you're going to have to ask, am I the real deal?

[41 : 10] Am I what God wants me to be? And if not, right now is a good time to make that right. And it begins by just doing this. God, I'm sorry, I've been more concerned about what people think than you think.

And I want you to change that. I want you to do it. I can't do it. I'm just too big a sinner. But I'm asking you to do a work in me. I'm asking you to shape my heart, change my thinking, change my attitudes.

change. I want to be the real deal for you. We're going to have Brian come and sing one verse of an invitation. Maybe you need to get up and come and just kneel somewhere along the surface.

Maybe you just right there at your seat, just kneel. Maybe you just stay seated or be seated after we stand. But I urge you to do business with God. Let's stand as we hear Brian sing this hymn of invitation.

Join him if you'd like to. Bye. Bye.