

Healing the Hearts and Minds

James Smyda

Recorded on May 20, 2023

As you all know, in about a week we are going to be keeping the Feast of Pentecost. There is a lot of meaning packed into what is symbolized by the Feast of Pentecost. As I like to refer to it, it's the day of salvation for the Firstfruits. It encapsulates not only the giving of the Holy Spirit, the entering into the New Covenant with God but it also pictures the resurrection and the finishing of that process. Today in the sermon we're going to focus on that first part; the actual giving of the Holy Spirit and how it solves the fundamental problem that we as human beings, have in this life. Our fundamental nature—who we are inherently as human beings—is fundamentally flawed. As we're going to see in the sermon today, we not only lack the ability in our nature to reign in our carnal lusts and desires to do what is right, we lack the ability to even understand what is right; to even comprehend the right way to go. Let alone to discipline and harness our human nature to actually live that way.

What we actually need is *the healing of our hearts and minds* and that's what the Holy Spirit provides for us.

If you would like a title for this sermon, it is:

Healing the Hearts and Minds

If you look back at history—just the whole history of the world—we can see this fundamental problem. After God created Adam and Eve in the garden and started off the human population as it slowly grew, it only took about 1650 years for mankind to get so corrupt and so perverted and for things to get so bad that God literally had to wipe everything out and just start over with just one family and start the process over again. Mankind had become so corrupted, there was no way to fix it, so He had to wipe it out and start over again. It only took 1650 years. Turn to Genesis 6 and we'll see this. It speaks to the fundamental flaw that mankind has. To address our problems, we have to first correctly diagnose the problem and the problem is us—our heart.

Genesis 6:5 *Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.*

6) *And the LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart.*

7) *So the LORD said, "I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them."*

8) *But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.* (NKJV)

We know it was through Noah and his family that God preserved the human race and continued it after the flood. But we can see it took less than two millennia for man to get

so evil and so bad that God had to wipe everything out and start over. That's due to a fundamental flaw that we all have. It's innate in all of us and something we all have to come to terms with and face. We've seen the enemy and the enemy is us. Our carnal human nature always wants to think, "Me and my family and friends are the good guys." The problem is those folks over there. It's like listening to political debates. Here in the U.S., we have two major parties—the Republicans and Democrats—and you listen to speeches and what you'll hear most of the time is, "Our party stands for what is good, all the problems are caused by those other guys over there, but if you vote for our side, we'll fix everything". That's the fundamental part of human nature. We have to realize that that's not the case—the problem is all of us. It's inherently in all of us and we have to address that to solve anything.

It's common human thinking, in the field of psychology, to look at it like, children are born pure and they are good and things really just go wrong if they've been abused or been raised in harsh circumstances or impoverished circumstances—that's where things go wrong because they start off innately good. That's not what the Bible tells us. Turn over to Genesis 8, this is following the story right after the flood. It mentions Noah doing sacrifices to God after the flood has been wrapped up and they are back on dry land again.

Genesis 8:20 *Then Noah built an altar to the LORD, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird, and offered burnt offerings on the altar.*

21) And the LORD smelled a soothing aroma. Then the LORD said in His heart, "I will never again curse the ground for man's sake, although the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; nor will I again destroy every living thing as I have done. (NKJV)

We want to think that children are good and innately pure and have a good nature and its harsh circumstances, or parenting or abuse, or poverty that makes things go wrong. While it is certainly true that you can correlate bad parenting or abuse or harsh circumstances to having more severe problems later in life—that's certainly true, you can correlate those things. But to say that's the only problem is not fundamentally understanding the problem. The problem is us; we have an inherent nature in which we have a heart problem. We are not able to harness our human nature to do the right thing, we don't even have the capability to comprehend what the right way is. This was what the fundamental problem was with God's relationship with Ancient Israel.

The whole story of Ancient Israel debunks the common theories today of what causes mankind's problems. It's often poverty or harsh conditions. God takes Ancient Israel out of slavery and they are out of harsh conditions and on the way coming out—just to be humorous about it—they even receive what's commonly referred to today as reparations. They get to spoil Egyptians and are given wealth on the way out and then God takes care of them through all of this and gives them the Promised Land. They even walked into intact cities and that's one of the big things we don't see in that story. They didn't have to go into this, as you might say, in the way of how America today was settled; where people traveled across the ocean to where there wasn't much of anything

and they had to start from scratch and build cities. In this case, they go into the Promised Land and they are taking over intact cities and the infrastructure is already developed there. They get to take advantage of all of that. In spite of all these advantages on the way, it still doesn't work and they still keep messing up and going astray. Because the fundamental problem in all of this is *their heart*; that's why it didn't work.

Turn to Deuteronomy 5 and we'll see where it records Moses recounting the Mount Sinai story. Notice a comment starting in verse 28. It tells us the core reason why, in spite of all the advantages they were given, having the True God, having a relationship with Him, giving them His laws, instructing them in the right way to go—giving them the formula for success—it still doesn't work. This is why.

Deuteronomy 5:28 *"Then the LORD heard the voice of your words when you spoke to me, and the LORD said to me: 'I have heard the voice of the words of this people which they have spoken to you. They are right in all that they have spoken.*

29) Oh, that they had such a heart in them that they would fear Me and always keep all My commandments, that it might be well with them and with their children forever! (NKJV)

He knew that even though He lays out the formula for success for them and they say, *Whatever the Lord has said, we will do, we will follow it*. He knows they are not going to be able to pull that off. They don't have the heart in them and it's just going to be a matter of time before they go astray. In Hebrews 3, the author of Hebrews is addressing the whole situation where the Israelites go to take the Promised Land and they go to spy out the land and say, "There's giants in the land. We're all going to die and God won't be able to deliver us" because they don't have the faith in God to follow through with what He tells them to do.

Hebrews 3:7 *Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says: "Today, if you will hear His voice,*

8) Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, In the day of trial in the wilderness,

9) Where your fathers tested Me, tried Me, And saw My works forty years.

10) Therefore I was angry with that generation, And said, 'They always go astray in their heart, And they have not known My ways.'

11) So I swore in My wrath, 'They shall not enter My rest.'" (NKJV)

So, he's telling us what the core problem was. It was a problem with their heart. Until that problem is addressed, history has proven that mankind always goes astray, it's just a matter of time. They may have periods where things go right for a while and they stay on the right track, but just give it time and it's going to wind up going wrong. We are all inherently flawed. That's one of the lessons of the Feast of Pentecost, we have to have the Holy Spirit to change and *heal our hearts and minds*. We're going to see there are

two major components here. It's not only the ability to get our hearts to do the right thing, it's also the ability to understand the right path in the first place.

Jeremiah 17 is one of our common human nature scriptures. It speaks to both of these issues.

Jeremiah 17:5 *Thus says the LORD: "Cursed is the man who trusts in man And makes flesh his strength, Whose heart departs from the LORD.*

6) For he shall be like a shrub in the desert, And shall not see when good comes, But shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, In a salt land which is not inhabited. (NKJV)

Notice it's not just an issue of *his heart departs from the LORD*; it says *he will not see when good comes*. It's not that good is never going to come to this guy, it's he won't recognize the good when it's right in front of him. He won't be able to discern the right path to go

Continuing in verse 7) ...

7) Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, And whose hope is the LORD.

8) For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters, Which spreads out its roots by the river, And will not fear when heat comes; But its leaf will be green, And will not be anxious in the year of drought, Nor will cease from yielding fruit.

9) The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it?

10) I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give every man according to his ways, According to the fruit of his doings. (NKJV)

That deceitful heart is the problem. That's why it's not just the issue of not being able to keep our human nature under control to go the right way. When you have a nature that is lying to you, that distorts your perceptions, you often can't even discern the right way because you have a nature, a mind that is lying to you, that wants to deceive you and pull you away from that. Even though it's not just an issue of seeing the right way and saying, "No I'm going to be rebellious and do the opposite"—and we do that as well—often that deceitful nature convinces us that the wrong way is the right way so we can't even trust ourselves in that regard. That is the fundamental problem we have to address. Notice in Romans 8, it's this whole issue as to why Paul tells us the carnal mind is not capable of following God. Not capable of doing what's right because of this two-fold problem of not only being able to overcome our human nature, nor to even understand the right way to go.

Romans 8:7 *Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.*

8) So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. (NKJV)

In other words, we're just not capable of it. We don't have it within ourselves and that's the inherent thing that we have to come to terms with. To even receive God's Holy Spirit, to be able to repent of not just what we have done but of who we are. To realize it's fundamental to us. We have a deceptive human nature. We like to say, "I'm a pretty okay person, it's just those bad criminals out there. Those are the bad people. Me and my family, we're okay, we're pretty decent folks." That's how our nature wants to see it. We have to realize that there is none of us who are good. That's a hard thing for our human nature to fully grasp and admit but is exactly what the Bible tells us. Turn to Romans 3:9.

Romans 3:9 *What then? Are we better than they? Not at all. For we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin.*

10) *As it is written: "There is none righteous, no, not one;*

11) *There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God.*

12) *They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one."*

13) *"Their throat is an open tomb; With their tongues they have practiced deceit"; "The poison of asps is under their lips";*

14) *Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness."*

15) *Their feet are swift to shed blood;*

16) *Destruction and misery are in their ways;*

17) *And the way of peace they have not known."*

18) *"There is no fear of God before their eyes." (NKJV)*

Our human nature wants to always think, "I'm the exception. All these other people, they are evil but I'm good hearted, I'm sincere and I'm trying to do good." That's what we all want to think of ourselves but we have to realize that we all have that lying human nature that really has no fear of God. We have to depend upon God to change that nature and show us where we're wrong because our human nature is going to lie to us. It's going to tell us that our actions are good and right and it's just other folks who have the problem. It's understandable why I did this and let me give you my excuses that justify my behavior. We have to admit we are just inherently sinful and we have to repent of that and be willing to turn away from it. To admit that there are none of us who are good and we need God to show us the right way because we don't know the right way to go. That's what the book of Proverbs tells us. Turn to Proverbs 14:12.

Proverbs 14:12 *There is a way that seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death. (NKJV)*

That's also often the course, where we think we have it figured out, we think we have the right way but when we follow our own path, it keeps turning out bad. That's the history of human civilization. All different forms of government have been tried, all different types of personalities have been in charge of governments at various times and it always seems to end badly. It always ends in war and destruction with a lot of problems. That's because there is not a winning formula. If you have this type of government or put that particular guy in charge, everything will be good. No, it won't; if

we're not inspired by God and following His way of doing it, it's going to end badly, it's just a matter of time. That's just inherent to all of us. As I mentioned, it's not just the ability to harness our human nature, to have the discipline to do what we know is right, it's also the ability to understand the right way in the first place. As we're going to see, the Bible refers to this as *the eyes to see and ears to hear*. That's how we perceive information. When you hear somebody telling you something or you witness something with your eyes, that's how we take in information. The Bible uses this as an analogy to show how flawed we are in our ability to understand the right ways. We're going to see a number of scriptures that talk about the fact that as carnal, physical, human beings without God's Holy Spirit, we don't have *the eyes to see and the ears to hear*.

Even if we have that Spirit, if we aren't yielding to it, we can still have that same problem of not having *the eyes to see and the ears to hear*. Let's notice some examples in the Bible. Turn to Deuteronomy 29:2.

Deuteronomy 29:2 *Now Moses called all Israel and said to them: "You have seen all that the LORD did before your eyes in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh and to all his servants and to all his land—*

3) the great trials which your eyes have seen, the signs, and those great wonders.

4) Yet the LORD has not given you a heart to perceive and eyes to see and ears to hear, to this very day. (NKJV)

In other words, they had witnessed some incredible things. We're going to look at some of that a little later in the sermon. All the physics-defying miracles that they witnessed, that any human being seeing these would exclaim, "What's behind this?" When they saw seas parted, food that fell from the sky six days a week—they saw incredible things take place. But it says, you still don't have *the eyes to see and the ears to hear*. In spite of all the physical evidence that they had, there was still a fundamental component missing. Without having their eyes open through the Holy Spirit and the ability to understand the right way and go in the right direction, it's just inherently a matter of time before it all goes bad. Notice another reference in Jeremiah 5:20.

Jeremiah 5:20 *Declare this in the house of Jacob And proclaim it in Judah, saying,*

21) Hear this now, O foolish people, Without understanding, Who have eyes and see not, And who have ears and hear not: (NKJV)

Notice again, *no ears to hear or eyes to see*.

22) Do you not fear Me? 'says the LORD. Will you not tremble at My presence, Who have placed the sand as the bound of the sea, By a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass beyond it? And though its waves toss to and fro, Yet they cannot prevail; Though they roar, yet they cannot pass over it.

23) But this people has a defiant and rebellious heart; They have revolted and departed.

24) *They do not say in their heart, "Let us now fear the LORD our God, Who gives rain, both the former and the latter, in its season. He reserves for us the appointed weeks of the harvest."*

25) *Your iniquities have turned these things away, And your sins have withheld good from you. (NKJV)*

Regardless of what they saw and the miracles done, that didn't bridge this gap of the fundamental flaws that were inherent in their nature. We often think—I've thought this in years past in my life and I've heard a lot of church of God members talk about it—if we could only see the miracles in life like the people back in biblical times did. To see God's powerful Hand and witness all of these fantastic miracles that we see played out in the Bible, then we could really have faith. That would really get our attention. History proves the opposite. Even the people who saw these fantastic things, all that physical evidence would only last a short period of time and didn't fix the fundamental flaws within their nature.

To see some examples of this, turn to Exodus 14, we're breaking into the middle of the Exodus story. We're going to read what takes place right at the Red Sea, right before they actually cross through. It's important to put this in context of what these people have witnessed, even getting to this point. They had already witnessed all the plagues that played out in Egypt. They witnessed the death of the firstborn, they witnessed Moses telling them, to start off with, that God is going to deliver them out of slavery, Pharaoh is going to let you go and all of this plays out. Then eventually they see all of these miracles and a lot of these plagues as we know and they were completely protected from. That's got to get their attention that all these horrendous plagues are happening to the Egyptians but not to our people. Even at the end, they see all the firstborn of man and beast of all the Egyptians are dead when they are marching out of Egypt but it doesn't happen to any of them. They have to be seeing, if they are paying attention to what's around them, that there are obviously supernatural forces taking care of them; how else do you explain any of this? That's just common logic to look at that. But as we see, there's a repeat in history of a short period of, "God is great, He's taking care of us" and then the next time a problem comes along and it's, "We're all going to die and He has deserted us and brought us out here to kill us in the wilderness." This just keeps repeatedly happening. It doesn't matter how much physical evidence they see; they revert back to that same evil nature. Notice in verse 8.

Exodus 14:8 *And the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he pursued the children of Israel; and the children of Israel went out with boldness.*

9) *So the Egyptians pursued them, all the horses and chariots of Pharaoh, his horsemen and his army, and overtook them camping by the sea beside Pi Hahiroth, before Baal Zephon.*

10) *And when Pharaoh drew near, the children of Israel lifted their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians marched after them. So they were very afraid, and the children of Israel cried out to the LORD.*

11) *Then they said to Moses, "Because there were no graves in Egypt, have you taken us away to die in the wilderness? Why have you so dealt with us, to bring us up out of Egypt?"*

12) *Is this not the word that we told you in Egypt, saying, 'Let us alone that we may serve the Egyptians'? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than that we should die in the wilderness."* (NKJV)

Notice, even after all the deliverance they've had, they aren't considering that God saved us all these other times, maybe He's going to take care of us now too; no, they jump straight to, "We're all going to die" because they are focusing on the obstacles and the army coming after them. They aren't taking into consideration having faith that the God Who pulled off all these other miracles can pull off some more. That doesn't sink in and it's a repeated track record as we'll see throughout their behavior.

Continuing in verse 13) ...

13) *And Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid. Stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which He will accomplish for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall see again no more forever.*

14) *The LORD will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace."*

15) *And the LORD said to Moses, "Why do you cry to Me? Tell the children of Israel to go forward.*

16) *But lift up your rod, and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it. And the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea.*

17) *And I indeed will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they shall follow them. So I will gain honor over Pharaoh and over all his army, his chariots, and his horsemen.*

18) *Then the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I have gained honor for Myself over Pharaoh, his chariots, and his horsemen."*

19) *And the Angel of God, who went before the camp of Israel, moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud went from before them and stood behind them.*

20) *So it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel. Thus it was a cloud and darkness to the one, and it gave light by night to the other, so that the one did not come near the other all that night.*

21) *Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the LORD caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea into dry land, and the waters were divided.*

22) *So the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea on the dry ground, and the waters were a wall to them on their right hand and on their left.*

23) *And the Egyptians pursued and went after them into the midst of the sea, all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen.*

24) *Now it came to pass, in the morning watch, that the LORD looked down upon the army of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and cloud, and He troubled the army of the Egyptians.*

25) *And He took off their chariot wheels, so that they drove them with difficulty; and the Egyptians said, "Let us flee from the face of Israel, for the LORD fights for them against the Egyptians."*

26) *Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea, that the waters may come back upon the Egyptians, on their chariots, and on their horsemen."*

27) *And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and when the morning appeared, the sea returned to its full depth, while the Egyptians were fleeing into it. So the LORD overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea.*

28) *Then the waters returned and covered the chariots, the horsemen, and all the army of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them. Not so much as one of them remained.*

29) *But the children of Israel had walked on dry land in the midst of the sea, and the waters were a wall to them on their right hand and on their left.*

30) *So the LORD saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore.*

31) *Thus Israel saw the great work which the LORD had done in Egypt; so the people feared the LORD, and believed the LORD and His servant Moses.*

(NKJV)

Notice it says *they believed Him*—for a very short time. This plays out, they watch this incredible miracle take place. They are literally watching the gulf of Acaba being parted and the walls of water out, walking on dry land through basically an ocean. They come out on the other side and watch the army that is pursuing them be drowned. If this doesn't get your attention, nothing will. This is so physics defying of a miracle, there has to be a God who is taking care of this, there is no other way to pull this off.

Just a couple weeks later, the first time they face a hardship, what happens? They immediately start thinking, "We're all going to die". It doesn't last very long. Turn to Exodus 16, just a couple weeks later after witnessing those incredible events and they start getting hungry. Notice what their attitude is.

Exodus 16:1 *And they journeyed from Elim, and all the congregation of the children of Israel came to the Wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after they departed from the land of Egypt.*

2) *Then the whole congregation of the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness.*

3) *And the children of Israel said to them, "Oh, that we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat and when we ate bread to the full! For you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger." (NKJV)*

This is a very, pessimistic, fatalistic attitude. They aren't thinking, "Just a couple weeks ago we had this ocean parted; we went through it, He drowned and killed the armies that were after us, I think He has this under control." This thought doesn't occur to them.

They just think they are hungry and uncomfortable, “We’re all going to die”. They just don’t have the ability to comprehend who they are dealing with and to have faith in it. That’s inherent to all of us. This same type of fundamental problem happened with the apostles as well. The apostles in the New Testament are hanging out with Christ, watching Christ perform these incredible miracles, being taught firsthand with Him. As we’re going to see, before their conversion, Christ is explaining things to them and it’s going right over their head. Turn to Mark 8 and we’ll see an example of this.

Mark 8:13 *And He left them, and getting into the boat again, departed to the other side.*

14) Now the disciples had forgotten to take bread, and they did not have more than one loaf with them in the boat.

15) Then He charged them, saying, “Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod.”

16) And they reasoned among themselves, saying, “It is because we have no bread.”

17) But Jesus, being aware of it, said to them, “Why do you reason because you have no bread? Do you not yet perceive nor understand? Is your heart still hardened?” (NKJV)

A hard heart and you don’t understand—the two fundamental problems.

18) Having eyes, do you not see? And having ears, do you not hear? And do you not remember?” (NKJV)

Now we have *the eyes to see and the ears to hear* problem; that ability to perceive. Notice specifically because we’re going to see this later when we look at scriptures on the Holy Spirit. He is mentioning specifically, *you don’t understand and you do not remember*. Just take note of that.

19) When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of fragments did you take up?” They said to Him, “Twelve.”

20) “Also, when I broke the seven for the four thousand, how many large baskets full of fragments did you take up?” And they said, “Seven.”

21) So He said to them, “How is it you do not understand?” (NKJV)

In other words, it’s a similar situation with these guys. They had witnessed physics defying miracles taking place, that are happening right before their eyes. It’s not like they didn’t see any evidence of who He is. Like with Ancient Israel, if they were paying attention at all, it’s pretty obvious that there is some supernatural God Who is taking care of them. There is stuff happening that you just can’t physically explain. The same things were happening here. Christ tries to explain to them, a spiritual analogy, they have no idea what He’s talking about. It just goes right over their heads. The key is to understand spiritual things; it doesn’t matter how smart we are, it doesn’t matter what a scholar we are or what languages we understand or how much we study and how much we put in, if God is not opening our mind—if we are not yielding to that spirit—we’re not

going to understand. We don't understand God's truth because we are so smart, we figured it out. That's not true of anybody. If God doesn't open our minds with His Holy Spirit and perform a miracle, we just aren't going to get it. It doesn't work like that.

Notice in 1 Corinthians 2:6.

1 Corinthians 2:6 *However, we speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing.*

7) But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory,

8) which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

9) But as it is written: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him." (NKJV)

Notice once again, we have that same analogy, *the eyes to see and ears to hear*. Our ability to take in information; if we don't have the Holy Spirit, those physical means of perceiving and processing information is just not going to work for us.

10) But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.

11) For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God.

12) Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. (NKJV)

We have to appreciate the incredible gift of God's Holy Spirit that makes even being able to perceive and understand the truth a possibility in the first place. It's not just our inability to harness our human nature, we have to have His spirit to even grasp the things that we even need to repent of. To even understand the right path to go.

As we went through Mark 8 earlier, I pointed out two things. When Christ was correcting the apostles, He mentioned "You don't understand and you don't remember". The reason I point that out is because, the Holy Spirit addresses both of these things. Look at John 14:25.

John 14:25 *These things I have spoken to you while being present with you.*

26) But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you. (NKJV)

He knew He was relaying a lot of information to them that was going to go over their head. That they weren't really going to process, they weren't converted yet, they didn't

have the Holy Spirit so it was going to go over their heads like in Mark 8. He is making the point to them, when you receive the Holy Spirit, it's going to bring this stuff back into remembrance to you and you'll say, "Now I get it, now I understand it". If you're like me, you've had numerous times in your life where you are struggling with something or praying for an answer for something and a memory just pops back into your head, of something you've been taught before and you say, "Now it makes sense, now I have the answer". If we are yielding to God's Spirit, He teaches us through that. Sometimes things we've studied or learned years ago that we didn't fully grasp or fully get the meaning at the time, pops back into our head and it's brought into remembrance and we go, "Now I get it, now it makes sense". That's one of the things the Holy Spirit will do. It's the *Spirit of truth* and it *guides us into all truth*. It enables us to understand and if we're yielding to it, we'll continue to grow and learn more and more.

Notice John 16:12.

John 16:12 *"I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.* (NKJV)

In other words, you don't have *the ears to hear* right now but you will later when you receive the Holy Spirit. Right now, it's just going to be information and you're not going to really get it.

13) However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.

14) He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you.

15) All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you. (NKJV)

You can see that the Holy Spirit not only brings things into remembrance, enables us to understand the truth and teaches that, it can also help in changing our inherent nature. We have two problems, it's not just the ability to understand the right way—even when we understand the right way, the other obstacle we have to overcome is keeping our own pride, our own lusts, our fleshly desires, to harness them and make ourselves do the right thing even when it's painful. That's the struggle with Christianity; even once we understand the right thing, now we have to act upon it. Now we have to do it even when it hurts, even when my carnal nature says, "I like my sin and I want to go that way but I know it's wrong". There has to come a point where we say "no" to ourselves and say, "Even though I really want to go that way, it's not right and I know better than that and I just have to tell myself 'No' and block that out and choose differently". We have to have God's Holy Spirit to have—I'll use the word *willpower*—but it takes more than willpower. Our own willpower is not enough but I think we understand the concept of willpower and making yourself do what is right—that spiritual power to do that. Turn to Hebrews 8 because it addresses the whole issue of not just healing our minds from an understanding point of view, but our hearts in terms of softening our hearts so that we can actually follow through and live what we know is right.

Hebrews 8:7 *For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second.*

8) *Because finding fault with them, He says: "Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah—*

9) *not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they did not continue in My covenant, and I disregarded them, says the LORD.*

10) *For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.*

11) *None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, "Know the LORD, for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them.*

12) *For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more."*

13) *In that He says, "A new covenant," He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away. (NKJV)*

What we need is the ability to write the commandments on our hearts. We can have the commandments and even have the ability to understand what they mean, but there's another problem. It's making ourselves do it because our carnal nature is always going to present situations where we say,

"I know what it says, but I know what I want to do. I know what feels good. I know what's going to please my lust and my pride and my carnal human nature".

We have to stop and say "That's not right and it's going to end badly." We have to harness ourselves and do what's right. We have to understand that it's God's Holy Spirit is what enables that to be possible. Without it, it's not possible to pull off. Turn to Romans 8, we looked at this earlier but now we're going to read more of the context.

Romans 8:5 *For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.*

6) *For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.*

7) *Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.*

8) *So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.*

9) *But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.*

10) *And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.*

11) But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you. (NKJV)

It's the Holy Spirit that enables us to heal our hearts. To not only heal our minds to understand the right way to go, but to heal our hearts so that we can fight that carnal, evil nature that, even if we know what's right, we still want to do what's wrong. That's what enables us to do it.

We also have to keep in mind that even though as converted Christians, we've repented and been baptized and received the Holy Spirit and given *the eyes to see and the ears to hear* and the access to that strength to be able to live it, we can lose that. If we aren't utilizing it, even though we have *the eyes to see and ears to hear*, we can become dull of hearing. We can run astray from this and lose that ability if we aren't utilizing it in our day to day lives. Turn to Hebrews 5 and we'll see an example of this. We're going to break into a context where the author of Hebrews is addressing Christ's role as Melchizedek.

Hebrews 5:9 *And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him,
10) called by God as High Priest "according to the order of Melchizedek,"
11) of whom we have much to say, and hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. (NKJV)*

Notice he's not addressing an audience who has never had the ability to hear, who has never had *the ears to hear and the eyes to see*, he is saying, *you have become dull of hearing*. In other words, you have the ability to hear but you are losing it and it's going away. Read the next couple of verses and he's going to talk about a group who should be teachers by now; you should be experts in this because you've had the ability to understand this but you've been neglectful and not been pursuing this. This ability is vanishing. You have a hearing problem and you're getting duller and duller and not hearing much anymore even though you've been given that ability.

Continuing in verse 12) ...

*12) For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food.
13) For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe.
14) But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. (NKJV)*

Notice he says *by reason of use*. These are people who are using the Holy Spirit on a day-to-day basis. Who regularly not just study to understand what the Book says, but are actively trying to overcome and practice it in their day-to-day lives. The Holy Spirit is

not something that will remain static within us. We can't say, I got baptized and received it and as long as I tread water going forward it will remain the same—no it won't. You're either moving forward and growing or you're declining and falling backward. That is inherently how this works. We have to be constantly striving to grow and to learn more and to overcome more and more. If we're not, what happens is we become dull of hearing and then we stop paying attention to what's going on around us and then our character does the same thing. We slowly regress in our character and it happens slowly and we don't even perceive it. We don't even see what's happening because we are losing *the eyes to see and the ears to hear*. What Christ tells us is this is going to be an inherent problem in the church at the endtime. I personally believe we absolutely live at this time. Turn to Revelation 3 and we'll see in Revelation 2 and 3, there are seven letters that Christ writes to the churches. There are a number of ways to look at this. These cities had seven literal churches that were on a mail route at the time when John recorded the book of Revelation. Personally, I also believe this speaks to eras of time throughout church history. Not that everyone who lived in a particular time fits exactly in the description but these are good broad, general descriptions of the church at that time.

I think if we're honest in looking at the spiritual condition of the church of God today, I think Laodicea is a good way to describe it. I want you to notice the description that he gives because one of the things he speaks about this church is *the eyes to see, the ears to hear*—they aren't hearing, they aren't perceiving. They diluted themselves in their own human nature thinking, we're in God's church and we have the truth and we just need to hang onto this and coast into the Kingdom and everything is going to be okay. That's the attitude they have and Christ is giving a wakeup call that I think we should all pay heed to. Start in verse 14.

Revelation 3:14 *“And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God:*

15) “I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot.

16) So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. (NKJV)

As more clearly translated *I'm about to vomit you out of my mouth*. If Christ is saying *I'm about to vomit you out*, think about this—the body of Christ is the church and He's about to vomit you out, He's about to eject you out of the body. In other words, your salvation is at stake and you're about to lose it.

Continuing in verse 17) ...

17) Because you say, I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing'—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked— (NKJV)

Notice first of all, they are delusional in their condition. They do not perceive—they have a delusional view of themselves, thinking, “We’re great and have everything together and we just need to wait for the Kingdom to come and coast right in.” Christ is saying, “No that’s not the case at all, you’re in a horrible condition.” Notice He specifically says “You’re blind”. These are folks who have received the Holy Spirit, who should be given *the eyes to see* and He is directly telling them that they are blind. Later we’re going to see as we read on, He’s going to talk about standing at the door and knocking and questioning whether anyone’s going to hear it. These are people who have received the Holy Spirit and He is saying they are losing the ability to see—*the eyes to see and the ears to hear*.

Continuing in verse 18) ...

*18) I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see.
19) As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent.
20) Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.
21) To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.
22) “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”
(NKJV)*

Notice He talks about *standing at the door and knocking* and says, “If anyone hears me and responds”, He’s obviously spoken that, He’s questioning if they are going to hear. He’s already told them that they’re blind so what has happened here? We have people with the Holy Spirit who’ve been given initially *the eyes to see and ears to hear* but what’s happening? They are losing both. What has resulted is a delusional view of their own condition, thinking they are in great shape, *the apple of God’s eyes*. We have it all figured out and as you often hear in church of God circles today—“God only works in our group, we’re the tip of the spear, the best of the best”—that is a Laodicean attitude of thinking we have it all together and if everybody else was as good as us, they would be guaranteed to be in the Kingdom. That’s just a self delusional condition to be in.

How do we deal with this and make sure we don’t fall into this? We just need to follow the formula for the answer that Christ gives. He gives us counsel and says, “If you are in this condition, here’s what you need to do to fix the problem.” Let’s just follow His advice and see His formula and what does it mean? It starts in verse 18.

*18) I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich;
(NKJV)*

What does He mean by *gold refined in the fire*. Keep your finger here because we’re going to pop back to Revelation 3, and turn to 1 Peter 1 and we’ll see what He is symbolically referring to as *gold refined in the fire*.

1 Peter 1:6 *In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials,
7) that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ ... (NKJV)*

He's referring to faith in God as *gold refined in fire*. We're going to see a formula that first you have to have faith—you have to believe God as Hebrews 11 tells us—that *He is and is the rewarder of those who diligently seek Him*. We have to have total faith in Him but we have to act upon that faith and put it in action. Turn back over to Revelation 3.

Revelation 3:18 *... and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; (NKJV)*

If we see what the Bible refers to as *white garments*, just following this basic formula.

- *First, we have to believe God and take Him for real—trust in Him to deliver us and trust that He knows the right way and we don't.*
- *We have to harness our human nature to follow whatever He says.*
- *Then we have to act upon that even if it hurts.*

Look at Revelation 19 and we'll see *white garments* referred to.

Revelation 19:7 *Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.”
8) And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. (NKJV)*

If we just let the Bible interpret itself—again Christ is giving us a three-step formula—He says:

First you get the gold refined in the fire, that's faith. We have to believe that God is and is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

We have to diligently look to Him as the source of giving us the road map for how we should live.

But it's not just enough to understand, to have knowledge of what it says, we have to act upon it.

We have to put on those *white garments*—the righteous acts—we have to be willing to sacrifice and follow those instructions even if it hurts. Even if it costs us our jobs, our

friends, our family—whatever it costs we have to be willing to pay it. We have to follow it even when it hurts. Following that formula, that's what clears up our blindness. As long as we are following that, as we yield to God's instructions and yield to His Spirit, then He gives us more and He shows us more to overcome. Then the process just keeps repeating. He'll keep showing us more truth and show us more of our sins and more of the things we need to overcome. We have to keep responding to that and putting on those *white garments*, moving forward. But that also gives us clearer vision as we go forward. To see that turn to 2 Peter 1:5.

2 Peter 1:5 *But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge,*

6) to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness,

7) to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love.

8) For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

9) For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins. (NKJV)

What causes blindness in someone who has been converted and received the Holy Spirit and given *the eyes to see*? It's being neglectful. It's not being diligent in our study—not just study for the sake of knowledge—but study for understanding what we need to overcome. Putting that into action and living what we understand. We're all held accountable for what we understand. It's always easier to judge somebody else who may not understand the same things we do or we may be lacking in our understanding. We have to realize that we are all held accountable to live what we know and understand. Sometimes that is painful because we have to face our own pride, we have to overcome our own lusts, our own fleshly desires, to do that. Sometimes we have to sacrifice and be unpopular and lose friends or jobs—whatever is the obstacle that we might putting above God in following Him in our lives. But that is the basic formula.

We have to look at the incredible gift that we have been given through the Holy Spirit. As I mentioned, in about a week we are keeping the Feast of Pentecost. I love to refer to the Feast of Pentecost—because there is so much meaning packed into the day—as the day of salvation for the Firstfruits. The reason I say that is because we have Acts 2, the giving of the Holy Spirit, which is obviously connected with this day. We also have the wave loaf ceremony in Leviticus 23 which is what the resurrection and the fulfillment of receiving salvation. So, you have both sides of the process and why I refer to it as the day of salvation.

If we look at that first part of the giving of the Holy Spirit, it's the fundamental key to healing the hearts and minds of mankind. That's the fundamental problem that we see all throughout world history. All the way back from 1600 years after creation—what happens? Man becomes so evil and so perverted that God just has to wipe everything out and start over again. This is just such a mess that He can't turn it around—so just wipe them out and start over. That's what happens when we are left on our own. All

throughout world history, it doesn't matter what form of government we have had, or what type of personalities are in charge, it always winds up ending badly. The problem is us. As the old Pogo cartoon says, "I've seen the enemy and the enemy is us!". That's the fundamental lesson of all of this. We are the problem. We have to realize our human nature always wants to think—just like political debates—our side is good, it's those other guys who cause all the problems. We have to realize; we all have the problem and it's a heart problem. It's fundamental to all of us, it's not only just the ability to discipline our human nature and do the right thing, it's a fundamental lack of even being able to understand what the right way is.

We've all been given that Holy Spirit to give us *the eyes to see, the ears to hear*, but we can lose it. If we are neglectful of it, we will lose it and become like Laodiceans being spewed out of Christ's mouth and vomited out of the body. The key for all of us to learn, as we keep this Holy Day coming up, is to realize that we have to be putting this into action. It's a simple three step process. First, we have to have faith in God. Faith in what He tells us is right. Faith that He is right and when our human nature comes up to what He says and we have a disagreement, He's always right. As I heard a minister say many years ago, "Humility is the realization that God is always right". Realizing He is right, we're wrong, even if that's painful and we don't like it. Tough! He's always right. We have to be able to discipline ourselves and practice that in our daily lives. That has to be more important to us than anything else other than the constant entertainment that we are all presented with in our current lives today, to always distract us away from what's important.

As we go forward to keep this Holy Day, let's appreciate the incredible gift that we've been given through God's Holy Spirit, but also realize that if we aren't diligent in following Christ's three step formula, we can lose that Holy Spirit and we can be thrust out of His body. Let's be grateful for the incredible gift that He has given us that *heals our hearts and minds* and make sure we are being diligent to always yield to it.