

## Practice what you believe

Good Morning, I am delighted to be here this morning. It is lovely to see you all here. I was given a piece of advice for this morning. I was told: "If you can't strike oil in twenty minutes - quit boring..."

I thought that was good but just before I got here I had a note from Doctor Bullerwell, the Reverend Doctor Bullerwell. He said actually Ray, if you can't get that plane off the ground in two minutes she's not going to fly. I started thinking about that. If you can't get that plane off the runway right away it's going to go off the runway and you're going to crash. That pilot needs to practice – right?

Let's do a little interactive thing here. Before we begin I'm just going to do a little prayer here. If you would all bow your heads with me I would really appreciate it.

*Heavenly Father thank you for being with us this morning, I pray that the words that are spoken this morning will reflect what you want your people to hear and that each person here would hear what you would say to them. Let the words be yours Jesus and not mine. Let the Holy Spirit reach out and touch each and every one of you this day, in Jesus name Amen.*

By a show of hands, who gets better when they practice something? Yeah! That's what I thought. It doesn't matter if whether it's cooking, quilting, preaching; your job, whatever it is you always get better when you practice something. I am here to pass on the message that this applies to your relationship with Jesus.

The text for this morning I am taking from 1 John 1:5-8. It shows the Apostle John talking to the early Christians who had just separated from the Jewish faith. How do we, today, take a look back 2000 years ago and relate that to what is happening today? Well... that's what we are going to do today. We are going to take a look at what those problems are and we are going to see how they relate to us in this current day.

Reading from the text: *"This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."*

How does this apply to our everyday lives?

Well, I can give you an example of what happened to me just a little while ago. I was going into the local Safeway and they put in these new till systems. You know the ones where the change comes down in the side in the little pan. Somebody left their change there. I guess it would be about \$2.50 or something. Not a lot but somebody left it there. So, I am looking at this and I reach over and I picked it up. I am looking at the clerk waiting to get his attention to give it to him and the guy right behind me goes like this... (eye rolling and sigh). So I get the guys attention and I say could you hold this there may be some people who will come back and get it. I don't know whether the clerk is just going to pocket it or not and it doesn't matter to me. I am practicing what I believe here. I give it to the clerk and the

expression on the guy's face behind me could only be what is described as gobsmacked. It was totally hilarious. So he said "Are you a cop?" and I said "no" He said "What do you do?" And do you know what? For two dollars and fifty cents, I got an opportunity to talk to somebody about Jesus. That's a pretty good investment. Now think about this... What would the conversation have been like, if I had stuck the change in my pocket? Let that sink in for a minute.

That is practicing what we believe – right?

A lot of times people come up to me and they say "Ray, this Jesus thing..." "Yeah, this Jesus thing I gotcha" ... "Why do we have to, you know - do anything, why do we have to practice what we believe? Doesn't it say in the Bible that Jesus forgives us for all our sins?" I said, "Yes it does." It does say that, it does say that he will forgive all our sins, but there are a couple of conditions there, it is about repenting and the Blood of Christ.

In fact, does God even care if we practice what we believe? Let's take a look at that.

In verses 5&6 in our text we see that God is the light. If we look back at the original text we find that the word here is from the Greek word (Phos) meaning truth. Our scripture passage here tells us that there is no darkness in him and darkness here is that Greek word (Skotia) meaning falsehood or untruth. It goes on to say that if we claim fellowship with God, but do not practice the truth we - are - Liars. Now that is a pretty harsh word, when you think about it. Liars – I look at that and go "oh wow!" Basically God is truth, he is not untruth and even though we say we are Christians, if we are not practicing the truth... It is pretty heavy; we can't commune with God if we are liars and not practicing what we believe. It is what the Word of the Lord says that we are... It's not what I am saying; I am not calling you a liar. I am saying that the Word of God says that.

Let's take a look at some other scripture examples of Gods mind on this:

If you could turn with me in your bibles to James 2:20; I like the wording in the CEV for this. It is very straight forward, it doesn't sugar coat it or anything, so I am going to read from that today. It says: *"Are you so slow? Do you need to be shown, that faith without actions has no value at all?"* Let's take a look at another passage, Revelations 3:15-16 - *"I know everything you have done and you are not cold or hot, I wish you were either one but since you are lukewarm, and neither hot or cold, (you are not practicing your faith) I will spit you out of my mouth."*

God doesn't want us to be lukewarm Christians who practice what we believe when we feel like it. He wants us to be on fire for him every day. Not lukewarm, not cold, not I'll get around to it - but on fire.

What I would like to do at this point is kind of summarize what we have done so far.

- Point number 1 – God doesn't like it when people don't practice what they believe. I think that point has been clearly established.

Now I was thinking before I came into today about some examples of that. I thought okay Lord in your word where do you see this happening. I came up with three examples before I came in this morning.

The first one is in Acts for those of you taking notes. It is in Acts 5:1-11, it talks about Ananias and Sapphira, who promised something to the Holy Spirit and then lied to the Holy Spirit... and they were struck dead. In Luke 10:25-37 we have the parable of the Good Samaritan and we see the priest walk by on the other side of the road. Today it is the minister going to church. "I got to get there to do my sermon, I can't help that guy. You know... Kids in the back seat "shut up or I will turn this car around and take you right back home." I don't have time to pay attention to that poor guy suffering on the side of the road. Whatever the distraction is in our life we need to pay attention to what God wants us to do. Even the Apostles got caught up in this, think about Peter. Here he is preaching peace in peace in Acts 10:36 and yet in John 18:10 we see him cutting off the high priest's servant's ear. Now, if you do little research on this you will find that his aim was bad, he wasn't a good swordsman. He just foop, ah... here is your ear. Basically, Jesus was not happy with him; Peter was not in the will of the Lord.

What is Sin? Sin is not being in the will of the Lord. It is not about just those 10 commandments. He has written them on our heart now, but it's not just about that. It is about being in the will of the Lord. Not being in the will of the Lord is what sin is all about.

So what can you do about that?

In Lamentations 3:40 the prophet Jeremiah gives us some advice: "Let us examine our ways and test them and return unto the Lord." We really have the same issues today as they had 2000 years ago.

Here is something I want to share with you: A Pastor's Heart doesn't come about because they are perfect individuals. They are not doing what they do because they are holier than anybody else. Let me tell you where Pastors come from. Pastors have read the bible and they recognize a simple fact, they have a lot to be forgiven for and they become aware of that fact. Then they realize that they have the Blood of Jesus and that excites them because they have a way out. It's like your computer when it doesn't work anymore and you have that reset button... "Hello Jesus". Hit the reset and away you go again. Thank you Lord.

We can strut around and still practice our secret sins, we can say how good we are; we can be like the elder brother in the parable of the prodigal son. Think about what happens there. The younger brother goes off and "lays" with prostitutes, spends his dad's money, gets and blows his inheritance, but a lot of people miss some of the intent of that story. There is also the older brother who wasn't doing for the love of his father, think about that, because when his father asked him to come in and join the celebration he wouldn't do it. He felt his own wealth was being diminished. Both were at fault, both didn't care, one just had that sanctimonious I'm holier than you attitude.

They are acting like "I am my own saviour and I don't care." "I don't care about the Love of the Father, what I care about very succinctly and clearly is what you are going to do for me?" We have to watch that.

If we look at Ezekiel 18:21 - "But if a wicked person turns away from all the sins they have committed and keeps all my decrees and does what is just and right, that person will surely live; they will not die."

Christ gave his life so his Blood would be atonement for our sins. Here is a thing I want to say to the Grace-ist people, it very clearly says in the Word of God, y right here, (held up bible) not from Ray, but the solemn word of God it is very clear. Christ did not come to abolish the law, he came to fulfill it. So we still have to come up to a standard, we have to practice our faith in order to be able to communicate with the Lord. Remember our original text 1 John 1:5-8? It talked about being in fellowship and communion with the Lord. In order to do that, we must be walking in the truth and practicing what we believe.

Now let's go back to our text in 1 John 1:7 and read what it says: *"But if we walk in the light as He is in the light (remember light is truth here), we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin."* Repentance and the Blood of Jesus Christ make things right so that we can pick ourselves back up and practice what we believe.

When you go to your Doctor do you want him to practice? No, you want him to know what he is doing. You want him to get it straight before he is working with you. But what would he be like if he didn't practice? What would he be like if he didn't practice what he preached? Oh yeah... I will do no harm, oh by the way here are some heavy narcotics, don't worry about the effects they will wear off in 20-30 years.

What do you call the person who graduates at the bottom of his class in medical school? He's a doctor even if he graduates at the bottom. You want to make sure that he is working on what he does. You want to get the best – right? You're the patient you're going to go to him, he's going to come to you and give you what you need.

Let's see where we are at? What have we discovered so far? Summary again; isn't that great! It makes sure that everybody is not sleeping.

- God doesn't like it when people don't practice what they believe.
- People who think are right with God but don't practice what they preach are liars and are deceiving themselves.
- If we turn away from our sin, repent and practice what we believe we are covered by Christ's Blood and we can walk in the light of truth with God.
- Repentance and Christ's Blood is your reset button.

Why is it we move away from being in fellowship with Jesus? Well some people are deluded, some people are arrogant, some people are perfectionists, there are a myriad of different reasons. In my case I'm a perfectionist. Here is the deal – I sinned, I am never going to get that back, so why bother trying? No matter what I do during the rest of my Christian walk, I made that mistake. That guy cut me off and I turned to him and I said you are a ... Well I am not going to say it again, I made the mistake once, I do try to learn from them. You get out there and you realize after a while that no matter what I do as a person, I am going to make mistakes. Pastors make mistakes. Pastor Ray, Pastor Sonny oh... sorry didn't mean to burst your bubble. Nobody is perfect. The only way we are perfect is through Christ Jesus by his blood that is our sanctification so we get a chance to start again.

He gave me his promise he said to me that he has removed my mistakes as far from me as the East is from the West. That doesn't mean the West Coast here and China. That means one end of the universe to the other or as far as it is possible to move things away. In other words, so far away that they cannot even be associated with you anymore. That is wonderful. If we take a look at Psalms 103:10-13, it says clearly - *"He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor punished us according to our iniquities. For as the heavens are high above the earth, So great is His mercy toward those who fear Him; As far as the East is from the West, so far has He removed our transgressions from us. As a father pities his children, so the LORD pities those who fear Him."*

So what does that mean? It means there is no reason not to get back up and try again. We have that opportunity. We can, we have Christ Jesus; we make mistakes he is there for us. We cannot be our own saviours.

VIDEOo

I don't know if you guys have seen the video I sent to Pastor Sonny a couple of weeks ago. Have you seen the Good-o-meter? Basically this guy comes up and they talk about things and they put his life on a meter at the back and it says are they good enough and if not they go over to the Hell side and if they are good enough they go to the Heaven side. Everybody is failing. This guy walks up and he says: I had started a mission in Uganda. I worked for children's benefits. I worked for the betterment of society and I have done all of these wonderful things. He has a whole bunch of credentials behind him as to what he has done. They open the book up and they say "Oh but I see you have a subscription to Penthouse." And he said "Oh but I only read the articles" So the guy picks up his life's work and puts it on the meter. And it goes... Fail. (He is sent to the Hell side) The next guy walks up and he says Lord I am so sorry. He has a dossier this thick with his sins and he has nothing to stand for him or anything else. The other guy says: "Okay, we'll take a look at this but I am not too confident about what is going to happen here. I have got to be honest with you."

VIDEO - did you notice...

He goes to put it on the scale and a guy walks up and taps him on the shoulder and the man says: "Oh Jesus, he's with you." Jesus takes it and throws it on the stack, walks him over and he is saved. Why because the man said you stand on the scale, no, no, not you him, because it is Jesus who stands proxy for us. It's the Blood of Jesus that covers us for our mistakes. It is the Blood of Jesus for our sin, It is the Blood of Jesus that makes us able each day to say: "Lord I am sorry, will you walk with me today because I am not perfect, I need to be able to do this, I need you in my life, I need that relationship. Now and at the end of my days, I want Jesus to be standing proxy for me before the father. I think you do too.

One more thing I want to point out about practicing what you preach. Jesus gave us in the New Testament in John 15:2 what I will call the divine suggestion (Facetious tone).

It says this is my COMMANDMENT that you love one another as I have loved you. He doesn't say this is an optional thing people. He doesn't say your neighbour ticked-you-off so it's okay to treat them badly.

He says this is my COMMANDMENT that you love one another. Are you practicing what you believe today? Are you? The next day if you fail what can you do? You don't even have to wait for the next day. "Jesus, I am sorry" Do you know what repentance is? Look it up, it means to turn away. You can't just keep making the same mistakes and say sorry God ops I slept with my neighbour, sorry God ops I slept with my secretary, Ops slept with my assistant sorry God. Ops swore at my neighbour again. Whatever it might be, you can't just do that. It is about the turning around of your heart. That heart has to turn around and you have to get that relationship right or you're not in fellowship with God. Remember our text: If we walk in the light as he is in the light, but if we walk in darkness we have no fellowship with him, and if we say we do we are liars.

The fact that I may blow it every day doesn't stop me anymore from practicing what I believe, because I have the greatest gift ever in the Blood of Jesus. I can press reset and try again. I can renew my fellowship with him and so can you.

When you fall get up! Even a toddler knows this wisdom. Think about it, if you fall get up! It is very straight forward. Today I challenge you to get up and practice what you believe. I really think that's important.

Here are the two steps:

Step 1) Practice what you believe

Step 2) If we fail, we have the Blood of Christ, go back to step 1

This is rocket science I am preaching here people stay with me. (Facetious tone)

So what I would like to do. I think I will stop there. I think I have made my point. What I would like you to do is bow your heads with me for a minute and close your eyes. With every eye closed and every head bowed if you are ready to repent and start practicing what you are preaching. Just raise your hand where you are at and God will meet you and acknowledge your desire. The Lord sees that and he knows the desires of your heart.

I am going to pray for you.

*Heavenly Father, you have said that if we repent you are faithful and just to forgive us. Cause us this day to renew our fellowship with you and walk in the light of your truth and not in darkness. Let each person here today hear your voice in their hearts and realize that you are waiting for them to return to communion with you. Let them see that there is no condemnation only fatherly love and because of your precious blood they have a way back to you. Help us to practice what we believe. Jesus reach out and touch the hearts of those people where you saw the desires of their hearts, you saw the desires of those who would make it right with you. God let that fellowship be established. Let them walk in communion with you each day. Let them be spiritually renewed each day. Let them feel the joy of your love. Let them feel your spirit fill them up. Let them know what it is to be a Christian and what it means to walk with you. Jesus we thank you for being with us today I ask that you will be with each person as we go our separate ways today and that you will quicken the hearts today by this message. Jesus let the words be yours today and not mine.*

And all the people said: "AMEN!"