

Amend Your Ways

by A.W. Tozer

A.W. Tozer's sermon emphasizes the necessity of amending one's ways through repentance and moral integrity to experience true spiritual renewal and blessings from God.

Duration: 50:01

Scripture: Jeremiah 7:4-10, Jeremiah 7:12-14, Jeremiah 7:23, Jeremiah 7:28, Jeremiah 7:31

Topics: "Repentance"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of giving God and our souls a chance to breathe by prioritizing spiritual matters over worldly distractions. He highlights how indulging in external things like television, magazines, and sports can suffocate our souls and starve us spiritually. The preacher encourages discipline in sermon preparation and warns against the dangers of neglecting prayer and spending excessive time on entertainment. He also emphasizes the need for discipline in all aspects of life, including attending church, praying, and giving. The sermon concludes with a call to action, urging listeners to make a decision for salvation and not to remain on the verge of the kingdom of God.

Transcript

In the seventh chapter of Jeremiah, the first seven verses, the word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord saying, Stand in the gate of the Lord's house, and proclaim there this word, and say, Hear the word of the Lord, all ye Judah, that enter in at these gates to worship the Lord. That's what the Lord has hoped, the God of Israel. Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in his faith.

Trust ye not in lying words, saying, The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these. For if ye poorly amend your ways and your doings, if ye poorly execute judgment between a man and his neighbor, if ye oppress not the stranger, the powerless, and the widow, and shed not innocent blood in this place, either walk after the God to your hurt, then will I cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers, forever and ever. Now, I don't, or at least I have not been going to the altar to help people here, because I'm pretty well dehydrated when I get through preaching.

Until I get about a quart of liquid into me again, I'm not able to do much. And I thought I'd want to talk tonight rather than preach a regular sermon. I thought I'd like to talk to people at the altar.

And I will take the words of Jeremiah here, and show what the Holy Spirit says to speakers. Now, for tonight I'm not speaking to anybody but speakers. But I'm fully convinced that there are many listening to

me, many listening to me, who are on the verge of a new, satisfying spiritual experience.

And I'm convinced that there are Christians, that is, borderline people, who belong to churches but have never had the experience of renewal we call the New Birth, and they are just about ready to come through. So I'm going to put it around like this. As if you were one of those dissatisfied Christians, or a sinner, an unsaved person not yet renewed by grace, and I'm going to tell you how you can be.

Either one, or all, or both, or all three. Now, we have here in Jeremiah a kind, loving God. Always remember, God is kind and loving even when he sends people to hell.

Always God is kind. He can never be anything else. He is not willing that any should perish.

And he is not willing that any should be weak or barren or disappointed. If you are weak or barren or disappointed, as a professed Christian, or if you are a sinner on your way to perish, remember you are what you are out of the will of God, not according to the will of God. God doesn't will it.

And here in Jeremiah 7, God is showing the way out of danger, and he's showing the way into the land of Duluth. This land he called it so lovingly. And he says, frankly, that it is by a thorough amendment of life.

Now, amendment, as you know, an amendment, a true amend, is to correct. And it is to improve by alteration. That's a simple dictionary definition.

And so he says, if you want to continue to dwell in this land, if you want to know me in power and protection and safety again as your fathers did, then thoroughly correct your life. Change your life, because I'm not satisfied with the way it is now. Change it, amend it.

Now, that'll disappoint some of you. You thought I had a capsule that I could give you, which if you took with a glass of water, it would end all your spiritual trouble. But people like that, I haven't much to say to them, except may God have mercy on you, because the Bible is a very practical book and very easy to understand in all things pertaining to our salvation.

Now, it's possible that many of you are very near to a revival. I don't like to use the word revival, because if it's been wounded in the house of its friend, it's still bleeding. So I'd like to let it get well, at least, before I use it again.

So I've gone around to synonyms, and after all, I come back to revival and say that some of you are standing on the verge of revival. Some of you are standing on the verge of salvation. You're like a dusty, weary man who's traveled all day, and now he stands beside the bank of a clear, sparkling stream, and he senses, oh, how he senses a plunge in.

But he just can't quite make up his mind. And if I can, by anything I say tonight, be that which propels you, the detonator that sets off the little cat there that will plunge you in, I'll go back and sleep well tonight, knowing that I've, in the will of God, been able to help you a little bit. Now, I say that some of you are out of the kingdom of God, but you're just out a little distance, and you can perish as quickly five inches out of the kingdom as you can five million miles.

And some of you are on the border of actually entering a spiritual experience of such proportions and intensity and scope that the like of it will not have been heard of in the Africa a long time. And to an individual Christian, it may be only a day, it may be only an hour, it may be only a matter of moments, until

that which you are longing for and are not becomes a reality. And that which you are and are longing not to be... I'll finish the sentence, but anyhow, you know what I mean.

You are something, and you're longing not to be that, and you can be delivered from that. Or, you're longing to be something that you conceive to be the purpose and will of God for you, and you're not, and you can be. Now, the desired land may not be very far away.

You know, unbelief has a little way of playing with time and space and circumstance, and hiding itself nicely. Unbelief says, some other time, but not now. Faith says, now.

Unbelief says, somewhere else, but not here. And faith says, here. Unbelief says, someone else, but not me.

And faith says, me. So let's not say, somewhere else, some other time, to some other people. But let us begin to believe God and say, now, here, and to me.

Now, it says here, amend your ways. And I'm going to simply tell you, as frankly as if I were kneeling beside you here at the altar, how you can amend your ways and bring yourself into the will of God. For that's all you need to do, ever, to get in the will of God.

Just as all you need to do to get wet is get in the river. And all you need to do to put up a kite is get the kite into the wind. And all you need to do is to get into the will of God, and the blessings of God will flow without hindrance.

Now, the first thing, I'm not going to hold your cookies down, but at least I want the Holy Ghost to hook you with some of them, maybe all of them. Put yourself in the way of God's blessings. By that, I don't mean go to church.

You can go to church and be in bed and stay there all your life. But I mean put yourself in the way of God's blessings. It is a great error to look for grace as a kind of magic which operates intrinsically and trickfully, jumps on you as a benign bit of mercy out of the dark, and when you come to, you're blessed.

Grace doesn't operate like that because God doesn't operate like that. To believe that is to charge God with caprice and make salvation out to be a kind of divine accident. There are no accidents in the kingdom of God, and nobody ever got blessed by accident, never.

It never happened, because God blesses only moral intelligence, and he would have you approach him morally intelligent. Now, it doesn't mean your IQ has to be equal to Einstein's, but it does mean that you've got to come to him intelligently and approach God with the understanding that you're one personality and he is another, that he understands your language and knows your thoughts, and that you can tell him what's on your heart the same as you would tell your friends. Very many times people come to my study.

I don't call much. I have a reputation for not calling much, but God says, If you won't call, I'll send them to you. So they come to me all the time, and very often I simply say, Now, you pray.

I can't pray. Well, I say, Now listen, you spent a half an hour telling me your troubles. Can't you tell God what you told me? God is intelligent.

He understands, and that's the beginning of a nice prayer. And they begin to get a hold of God, because they've forgotten that God's intelligent, too. If he understands English, he even tends to read you Dutch, or

whatever you speak.

If you say, Ain't God know you, you mean, ain't? And whatever you say. If you say, There was my enemy? God says, I know there was. He understands.

God will talk your language to your brother. He won't fool with words. He wants your heart to talk.

So you come to God, and just get straightened out and put yourself in the way of God's bliss. Then the second thing is, let repentance do its healing work in your heart. For repentance has a healing virtue that comes to the soul of a moral creature.

The Pharisees, the Bards, we might say that repentance is not strange, but it falls like a gentle rain from heaven upon the place beneath. So when we repent, it does something for us. Let us be careful that we don't try to plunge into the kingdom of God without having repented.

We have just lived through, I hope we've lived through, a theological tunnel in which we were taught that repentance was so to choose. But brethren, repentance is for everybody that gets converted. There isn't any remote possibility of anybody ever entering the kingdom of God, ever, anytime, anywhere in the world that hasn't repented first.

Repentance is a prerequisite at the door of the kingdom of God, and we repent or we perish. And not all the Bible expositors and likely dividers of the distinct word of God can ever change God Almighty's fire. Either we repent or we die.

So let repentance do its healing work. Now, I think I ought to talk a little more about repentance and point out what I mean by repentance. I mean that I am to amend and correct and improve a lot of things in my life.

For instance, my business and my job. What about it? Is there anything in your business that displeases God? And if there is, you've got to stop that. But you say, if I do, I'll be on release.

Well, then go on release. Now, I'm serious, and I'm not trying to be funny or dramatic. If your business is keeping you out of the kingdom of God, you'd better let your business go and get in the kingdom of God.

But you say, how do I live and how does my family live? How do the birds live? God never allowed a bird to live. I can give you this on the authority of the Bible, plus the multiplied authority of a thousand instances that we might know in Christian biography, that if you must give up your job to become a Christian, if it's a dirty job, if there's wickedness in it and you can't do it and if you're right and you give it up to get converted, God will have another job for you before the next bill comes in, and you don't have to worry. Now, another thing.

Your personal finances. Now, you ought to talk about that a little. Maybe you need to correct those.

But you say, isn't salvation by grace? Yes, sir. Salvation is by grace if you'll mend your ways in your doings. Now, about any debts you might have, an outlawed debt.

Some people, at the statute of limitation, run out on their debts and then they waive their debt. How many of you have debts hanging back there? You say, well, but I don't owe them now legally. Yes, but you owe them morally.

And God is not talking about the laws of Pennsylvania, he's talking about the laws of the kingdom. And if you owe anybody any debts and you haven't paid it, or at least you're not trying to pay it, you needn't apply to the kingdom of God. And you won't receive dishonest people into the kingdom.

You'll receive people into the kingdom who were dishonest and who were thieves, but you can't continue to be dishonest and come into the kingdom of God. You leave your dishonesty at the door or you stay out. So, if you're the grocer, pay that grocer.

If you are behind in your payments, pay up. And you say, but I can't, I'm hopelessly in debt. Well, all right, go to the manual and be frank with him and say, I'm hopelessly sunk, but I'll do my best.

And usually that's about all these men want, is the knowledge that they've got a hold of an honest man. It's about all. So that I'm not talking about debt.

Most people have some debt or other, I'm sorry to say, in these terrible American days. We'll usually owe somebody. And I'm not talking about normal debt.

I suppose when I get home I'll find the gas bill due. I'm not talking about our normal. I'm talking about the fellow that's trying.

You will stay out of the kingdom of God until you turn to dust and ashes, but you'll never enter until you've amended your ways and your doings now set the law. And in your personal friendships, as a pastor of a great many years, nearly 26 years in my present church, I am prepared to say this without qualification. That particularly among young people, the most deadly and terrible enemy to spiritual life is bad friendships.

Now, a Christian becomes a Christian, and Jesus Christ then becomes first. And he must become a Christian with the understanding that he will give up any unholy friendship. If he continues his unholy friendship, he'll backslide, and any little spiritual touch he might have had will evaporate like the morning dew.

Young people, I'm here to tell you that unless you give up your bad friends and your friends whose influence is against you, you will never make good as a Christian. Some of you are speaking to Baptists and the Holy Ghost and flirting around with people that are bitterly bad for you and hard on your spiritual life. Now, you either give them up or you'll be a poor half-Christian for the rest of your life.

A young fellow will come to the altar and bawl his way through to us, and then you'll go back and the next day or two you'll find him out with the same half-saved or un-saved fellows he ran around with before, all girls. And then he'll be coming to church fewer and fewer times a year, and you can't find him. If he had cut bad company the night he was converted, he'd have grown like a cedar in Lebanon, but he stayed with bad company.

Now, amend your ways and your doings. There are some of you here, girls, that are trying to get filled with the Holy Ghost. When I see you come down here, I feel for you.

I am not as hard as I look. I've just got a 14, nearly 15 now. And I feel for you, girls, and I'd like to see some of you kids get marvelously filled with the Holy Ghost.

Later on you'll get married, and you'll have a family, and you'll have a home. And what it'll mean to you if you get right now these great big fellows. I wouldn't embarrass him by mentioning, but one of the big fellows down here, only 16 years old, as handsome as a statue.

I'm interested in those kids. I've really had six sons, and I love young men, young boys. I'd like to see you young fellows come out from behind that brush and come out clean and scrape your heels at the door of the kingdom and come in clean.

I'd like to see that happen. But unless you're willing to give up your shady friends, you'll stay in the shadows. You'll never come in.

And then your secret habit. I'm only going to ask you one thing. I know right here this is the spot where we all lick our lips and drool and say, Now, what's he going to say? Something sexually? No.

I have never been led of God to preach any of these to-men-only sermons, or to get intimate. I never do that. I don't think God wants me to, and I always get embarrassed, and people always do, and only the borderline sex maniacs enjoy it.

So I'm only going to ask you a question and then drop it. And that is, would you dare have your secret habit publicized? Would you dare let Brother Kopp know your secret habit? Would you dare tell the man who prayed here tonight? Would you dare let my happy camp know how you live in secret? That's all I want to ask you. Now, if you wouldn't, then amend your ways and your doings, because you'll never get saved until you do.

And if you're a Christian and your secret habits won't stand the light, you'll never get baptized with the Holy Ghost until they will. Jesus said these things were not done in a corner, and there's transparency about a spiritual life. They are perfectly transparent.

They are ready to be, and everybody knows their habits. How about yours? And in your past life, now, are all your sins forsaken and confessed and forgiven, and are all the wrongs eroded that you know about? Now, I want to put a little note, a bracket in here, so that I keep the devil from taking advantage. Because there are those who are teaching the keep-confessing doctrine.

Always be confessing. Run around confessing. Just let your mouth drip with confession.

And no matter what, just keep confessing all the time. That's the way to stay blessed. To me, that would be like taking medicine three times a day to stay well.

Let me explain what I mean. What has been sinned by the blood of Christ need not be confessed to man. If the blood of Christ has taken it away, have you any? Except where it has been, the sin has been an injury to another person.

And if your sin has injured somebody, and by confessing your sin you can lift the injury and heal it, then you're morally bound to confess that sin in order to heal up the injury which your sin caused. But your confession need only be made to the one against whom you had sinned. The idea of public confession, a man gets up and says in public, I want to confess, and about that time the canker chip comes out, I want to confess that I had a fight with my wife.

And he's relieving his own conscience by embarrassing his wife to death. That kind of thing is just plain ignorance, and it ought to be taken out here and buried deep or put in a septic tank. It doesn't belong in the kingdom of God.

Unless you have sinned against a man, you needn't confess your sin to that man. Now, Brother Sneed somewhere in the audience, he told me he would be, and suppose that I say some unpleasant or nasty thing about Brother Sneed, and later on I get under conviction and I go to Brother Jones and confess it. How silly.

The thing for me to do is go to the man I wronged, Brother Sneed, and I said a nasty, cruel thing about you. Please forgive me. You only need to seek the forgiveness of the one you've wronged.

So cruel confession must be made. It is always made against God. David sinned against Bathsheba, he sinned against Israel, he sinned against Uriah's wife, and he sinned against Uriah.

And he said, O God, against thee, the only, have I sinned. He realized that after all, all sin is against God. So we must go to God with confession of sins and make cruel confession to him, and if we can make reparations, make them.

If we can't, don't grieve people's hearts by telling them things. For instance, there are those who say you're walking down the street or driving down the street with a brother, and his brother says or does something you don't like, and you entertain a thought about it, and you say, I don't like that fellow's way of talking, or his English is bad, or he's ignorant, or I don't like him. And then later on you get under conviction and you have to run to that fellow and tell him that.

How unutterably silly. You didn't wrong him, you wronged yourself. Don't go to him and tell him that you thought he was a bum.

He didn't know that. It was in you. You were the fellow that thought.

You have that bum complex inside of you. Tell God about that if you want to. How abundantly that's fair.

Now, my relations to others. And then your ways and your doings. I'm down here at the altar now, and I'm saying, O God, why can't I get what I see others have? Why can't I get through? Well, how about it? Do you have feelings in your heart? And have you caused any hurt? And is there anything doubtful in your relationship to people? And people are living with the life that isn't theirs.

And some are common law, and some are unknown to the public, generally carrying on things. I'm not going to rub it in now. I'm just going to ask, how about it? You can come down 50 times here till your elbows go clear through these brand-new waters.

And when you're finished, you go right back to your town or where you came from. You don't even have to worry. Now, a few other little matters.

And that would be, order your life so as to give God a chance and to give your soul a chance to breathe. Many people just suffocate their souls by a world of external things. They have Life magazine, which is the moron's billboard.

And they have television, and they have radio, and they have sports, and they have it all. Now, neither radio, television, billboard, nor Life magazine in and of themselves may be evil. But for the time we've

given attention to all of that, we're starved inside of our souls.

We've starved ourselves. We've suffocated ourselves. I don't think any more television than the average man.

I think that it should be called smell-o-vation, because it reaches to heaven. But I'm not going to say you can't have a sec. But I'm going to say that if you get a sec in your home, you're putting yourself under frightful sensations to starve your soul and feed your funny bones.

You'll get a funny bone as big as a dinosaur's thigh, and your core will shrink, all hurting you as a pup. That if you do not give your soul air and get the weight of blankets off of it, you'll die. You've got to give your soul, and you can't feed it on yards of newspaper and inches of Bible and hope to get away with it.

You can't spend five minutes in prayer and hours watching television and get away with it. It'll tear you, brother. It'll shrink you up.

It'll narrow you down. You'll be like an old frozen potato in the spring. Wrinkled and limp, and you may be on the local board at home because they haven't got men enough to go around.

You on the board, you're suffocated. You've committed spiritual suicide. Now, another thing.

Begin to lay a little bit of discipline on your life. And people are like the coats that run through the woods or over the meadows. They just won't be disciplined.

They go to church when they feel like it. They pray if they feel like it. They give their money if they feel like it.

They just will not lay discipline upon themselves. There isn't a phase of human life anywhere that you can live like that and succeed. The businessman must discipline his hours and his business.

The athlete must discipline his body. The musician must discipline his fingers. And his cop, this big little fellow over here that plays the piano.

Why, you think he got like that or he's in comic strip? He got like that, punishing himself hours and hours and hours until he feels it and his fingers just know where to go. Mine don't know where to go. They haven't been educated, you see.

All they know is to bend around a knife and fork or tap a typewriter. But that's because they've been educated to those things. But it took a little discipline when I was first handling a knife and fork.

No doubt I filled many a block of mesh that appeared as in my lap. You've got to discipline yourself, brethren. Some of you never make good in the Christian life because you're too sloppy spiritually.

You're all over the place. You're all baggy and out of place. You're going to have to lay some discipline on your soul and say, Now, Jesus, show me how I can pull my life together and pull it in and narrow down a bit and put an edge on it.

You know what you do when you hold a razor? You make it narrower than it was before. People say, You're too narrow. A razor could be accused of being narrow.

And then you take it and strop it. That's to make it still narrower. Why? To get an edge on it.

And every successful man is a man who has disciplined himself and pulled his life down and made it one instead of a half a dozen things. Take gunpowder, for instance. You can take a spoonful of gunpowder and lay it down here.

And I'll spread it out on a rock and attach a match to it. And there'll be a little anemic puff. And a bit of fire.

And in a second it's out and gone and no harm done. A bug hanging from the mouth of it didn't even feel the weight of it or feel the heat of it. Just a puff and it's over with.

But put that in a brass shaft and put a lead bullet in. And put it in the breech of a gun and pull back the hammer and pull the trigger and you can bring down a buffalo with it. The same powder that just went pfff and did nothing will bring down a blue buffalo if you concentrate it.

And that's why some of you don't get anywhere. You don't read your Bible regularly. You don't pray regularly.

You go to church when it's nice weather or when there isn't something else to do. When you take your vacation, instead of coming back Saturday so you'll be home for Sunday, you come back late Sunday night so you'll be home for work Monday, showing which is the important thing in your life. Is that right, brother? Sure they go away and say Sunday night.

Get back late Saturday night and be at your place. Discipline yourself. Some of you will get a blister the first while back, but you'll get over that and bless your heart.

I sometimes say, I don't know, I don't know whether these people appreciate or know how much time I put in my sermons or how much, and I say, well, this ought to be easy. I've got this sermon. This is easy.

It's long, towards a week, and I pull it together usually late in the week with my other work. And I say to myself, well, this ought to be easy. And I jot down some notes.

And the first thing I do, and laboring and wearing myself out and laboring, and I say to my wife, I just, getting that sermon out is like having a child. It's more out of my heart. And she says, nobody knows that, so you might just as well take it easy.

That's her advice. And I say, well, maybe she's right, and the next week I try it, and it just won't work. I have, from the time I was 18, now 18 years old, laid upon myself the discipline of sermon preparation.

It may not be any good, but that's only because I have faith. And everything else is the same. If you don't discipline your life and pull it together and concentrate, you'll never get anywhere.

You didn't want to hear that, did you? You wanted to hear three steps into the rest of life. This is easy, this is easy, this is easy. Isn't that cute? And you say, isn't that just delightful? Now, I want to point out to you, friends, that carelessness is a curse.

And many of you come down here to the altar, and thank God you do, and I hope you'll be down here tonight. And you get some help, and then you go away, and you're careless. You know, carelessness in the Christian life, we're just the same as carelessness in raising a child, or carelessness in running a farm.

You know little Fanny Crosby, who was the author of so many of our fine hymns? Did you know she was blind from the time she was three weeks old? Do you know how she got blind? A careless nurse laid a

cloth that was fiery hot on her eyes. Carelessly blinded Fanny Crosby. And she made good in spite of it, but how much better she could have seen.

In the little town where I used to preach long years ago, a man got an infection in one of his eyes, and he went totally blind. The doctor said, that eye is done, it'll never see again, and we'd better take it out, because if we don't remove it, the other one may get it, and he'll be totally blind. Well, he said, all right, you can take it out.

So they put him under ether, and carelessly took out his good eye. That happened on Green Street in Morgantown, West Virginia. That is, he lived there.

Veterans, that's unpardonable. A doctor ought to have his license taken away and barred forever from practice. Who would blame the man because he didn't have brains enough to check on which eye was the right eye to take out.

Careless nurse and a navigator can put the ship on the rock. Careless nurse and an airplane pilot can smash you standing at the mountain. And carelessness in your Christian life can ruin you.

Then, I will say this. Be serious-minded. It's a sad hour, brethren, when our clowns and comedians get more pay than our President.

Serious-minded, President Eisenhower. With the weight of the world on his big shoulders. Gets less money and has fewer hairs than Bob Hope.

And for my money, you can have Bob Hope wrapped up in cellophane. You can have him. For him, it's delightful.

And I don't mind that at all. I don't mean we should go around looking as if we just returned from the funeral of the whole family. But I do mean that we're living in a world that doesn't take anything serious, seriously.

And takes things that aren't serious, seriously. There's a lack of the wrong things. And there's a lot of that in the church.

And among the people of God. So that banter and joshing and nonsense and funny stories take away all the blessing from your heart. I've seen this in my own church.

I tell them this every once in a while. Remember, everything I'm telling you now, I preach to my own people first. And I have seen, I've seen them do that.

They'd have a nice meeting and the presence of God would come down. But there's an intensity of the presence of God sometimes that'll bring the tears. God's presence moves down.

And they'll have an evening like that when it just seems as if God was so near he could touch them. And then they will go on and have a soda afterwards. Now, a soda is a perfectly harmless thing to have, I suppose.

And a hamburger, too. I hope they have one after church tonight. But the point is, they sit and josh each other.

And giggle and tell stories and fool. Until by the time they're ready to go home and go to bed, they haven't a trace of the glory left in their souls. They've foolishly stopped.

Somebody was telling me about a man who used to teach at NIA. I don't know his name. He's dead and gone, I think, off to be with the Lord now.

This man on the grounds here was telling me about him as a teacher. I believe it was this fellow, the little man, Joshua. And he said that when church was over, that man immediately went out and went home.

He wouldn't dissipate the blessing of his soul. They called him a mystic. You get called a lot of things, but just grin, it's all right.

But the main thing is to cultivate a serious mind. For American people are glissandoing themselves to hell. When we perish as a nation, which, God forbid, but when we perish as a nation, it won't be because our boys aren't the toughest fighters in the world.

It won't be because our geniuses, our scientists can't beat the whole round. They're doing well at producing material. When we perish, it'll be like France from internal moral corruption.

The finest poachers in Europe went down corrupt like a house of cards, because they were rotten internally. They had laughed themselves and sexed themselves into weakness. And Americans are on their way there fast.

Guffaw, guffaw, everlastingly having to laugh about everything. I laugh a lot. I tease my kids until it's awful.

And I think a sense of humor is a blessed way to relax, and I'm not against it. I'd be foolish to say so, because I have a reputation of having a sense of humor. But I can say this, the old boy's not going to get me down.

I know preachers that had a sense of humor, and they cultivated it at the expense of their spiritual life, and the result was, towards the end, they were simply pulpit clowns. I'm not going to be a pulpit clown, so help me God. So I don't guarantee that something will pop out the side of my head somewhere that'll get you laughing, because I just can't help it.

But they're not going to cultivate. I say we should cultivate serious mindedness. That's about all I want to say, except this one last word.

Set yourself to do a serious reading of the scriptures, and reverently read your name into the scriptures. If you will take the Bible and read it, and read your name into it, you'll be amazed at what it'll do for you. It's going to a very hard place.

I went to the scriptures. As you may know, my initials are a W, but I was named after a storekeeper up at Lagos, Pennsylvania. They were friends of my mother's and father's, and they named the boy after the man, and the girl, my sister Mildred, after the wife.

I sound foolish, and I wouldn't do it if you were around, but I go to my niece. And every citizen, Israel or Jacob or you, I put my name in there. And oh, brother, how it works.

God gets near to you somehow. He says, Fear not, and I put my name in, all three of them. For thou, and I put my name in, shalt not be ashamed.

Neither be thou, and I put my name in, confounded. For thou, and I put my name in, shalt not be put to shame. And go on down the line.

Then I come to this one. No weapon that is formed against thee, and that thee is a pronoun, and that gets my three names. No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper.

And every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment. Now, that's a little trick I do. I recommend it.

Put yourself in there. You say, the school where I went to, they didn't recommend that. Well, I recommend it, and I think it's a fine thing, because that makes it personal.

Nowadays they have the word, personalize. That's personalizing the scriptures. You'll be astonished what it will do for you.

Now, we've added a little altar service, and I've been instructing the Seekers in a manner that I would instruct and do constantly instruct people. Now, no death-bed stories have been told, and I have not claimed to be omnipotent or omniscient or have traveled widely. And I have no pictures to show you.

But I've just told you how you can get into the kingdom of God if you're out, and how you can get away on up into the steeple if you're in. Now, if you'll listen to me and obey God and do what your inner heart prompts you to do, we can have such an outpouring as you haven't heard for a long time. But if you don't want to do it, then I've done my part anyhow.

Maybe I didn't pray enough, but outside that, I've done all I know to do. So what about it now, young man? What about it? Fellas, I'd like to see all of you big, muscular, good-looking guys. There is a good-looking God can't sanctify because you're good-looking.

Paul Rager said it was hard for God to sanctify a good-looking man. And you're just a good-looking, you're in your own world. All right, I'd like to see you down here pouring yourself out before God tonight and amending your life, and you young women, amending your ways, driving some stakes in.

David said, "...a nail in a sure place." You want to gulp your blessing like the Pennsylvania Railroad engines you take on water on the run. Lower a scoop and go right on, gulp it, and arrive at the station all blessed up. That isn't the way God said it.

He says, "...amend your ways, drive some nails in, drive some stakes in, make some vows, discipline yourself, pull yourself together, promise to obey." It isn't so dramatic, but it works. We're going to have an altar invitation here, and we're going to ask every half-saved fellow to come down to the altar here. In the 7th chapter of Jeremiah, the first seven verses, the word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying, "...stand in the gate of the Lord's house, and proclaim there this word, and say, Hear the word of the Lord, all you Judah, that enter in at these gates to worship the Lord." That's just the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel.

"...amend your ways, and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in his place. Trust ye not in lying words, saying, The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these. For if ye poorly amend your ways and your doings, if ye poorly execute judgment between a man and his neighbor, if ye oppress not the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and shed not innocent blood in this place, neither walk after the God through your heart, then will I cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers, forever and ever." Now, I don't, or at least I have not been going to the altar to help

people here, because I'm pretty well dehydrated when I get through preaching.

Until I get about a quart of liquid into me again, I'm not able to do much. I thought I'd want to talk tonight rather than preach a regular sermon. I thought I'd like to talk to people at the altar.

And I will take the words of Jeremiah here and show what the Holy Spirit says to teachers. Now, for tonight I'm not speaking to anybody but teachers, but I am fully convinced that there are many listening to me, many listening to me, who are on the verge of a new, satisfying spiritual experience. And I'm convinced that there are Christians, that is, borderline people who belong to churches but have never had the experience of renewal we call the New Birth, and they are just about ready to come through.

So, I'm going to put it around like this. As if you were one of those dissatisfied Christians, or a sinner, an unsaved person not yet renewed by grace, and I'm going to tell you how you can be, either one or all or both or all three. Now, we have here in Jeremiah a kind, loving God.

For always remember, God is kind and loving even when he sends people to hell. Always God is kind, he can never be anything else. He is not willing that any should perish, and he is not willing that any should be weak or barren or disappointed.

If you are weak or barren or disappointed as a perfect Christian, or if you are a sinner and you are on your way to perish, remember you are what you are out of the will of God, not according to the will of God. God doesn't will it. And here in Jeremiah 7, God is showing the way out of danger, and he's showing the way into the land of Jerusalem.

This land he called it so lovingly, and he says frankly that it is by a thorough amendment of life. Amendment, as you know, an amendment or to amend is to correct, and it is to improve by alteration. That's a simple dictionary definition, and so he says, if you want to continue to dwell in this land, if you want to know me in power and protection and safety again as your fathers did, then thoroughly correct your life.

Change your life, because I'm not satisfied with the way it is now. Change it. Amend it.

Now, that'll disappoint some of you, who thought I had a capsule that I could give you, which if you took with a glass of water it would end all your spiritual trouble. But people like that, I haven't much to say to them except may God have mercy on you, because the Bible is a very practical book and very easy to understand in all things pertaining to our salvation. It's possible that many of you are very near to a revival.

I don't like to use the word revival, because this man who is in the house of his friend is still bleeding, so I'd like to let him go to hell at least before he can. So I've gone around for synonyms, and after all, I come back to revival and say that some of you are standing on the verge of revival, some of you are standing on the verge of salvation. You're like a dusty, weary man who's traveled all day, and now he stands beside the banks of a clear, sparkling stream, and he's tempted, oh, how he's tempted to plunge in.

But he just can't quite make up his mind. And if I can, by anything I say tonight, be that which propels you, the detonator that sets off the little cat there that will plunge you in, I'll go back and sleep well tonight, knowing that I've, in the will of God, been able to help you a little bit. Now, I say that some of you are out of the kingdom of God, but you're just out a little distance, and you can perish as quickly five inches out of the kingdom as you can five million miles.

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