

Prodigal Church

by B.H. Clendennen

B.H. Clendennen's sermon 'Prodigal Church' calls for a revival in the church to restore its spiritual vitality and impact on society.

Duration: 47:29

Scripture: Matthew 11:12, Matthew 14:25-26, Luke 15:13, Acts 2:2, Acts 2:41, 1 Timothy 4:1, Jude 1:3

Topics: "Lukewarmness"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the story of the prodigal son from the Bible. He compares the prodigal son to the state of the church, describing how it has become impoverished and compromised by the world. The preacher emphasizes the importance of turning away from worldly ways and returning to God. He highlights the love and forgiveness of God, using the example of the prodigal son's father welcoming him back with open arms. The sermon encourages the church to repent and seek a renewed relationship with God.

Transcript

And my message is the prodigal church. And he said a certain man had two sons. And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth unto me.

And he divided unto him his living. And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land, and he began to be in want.

And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into the fields to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husk that the swine did eat, and no man gave unto him. And when it came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father have bread enough to spare, and I perish with hunger.

I will arise and go to my father and say unto him, Father, I have sinned against thee, against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. Make me as one of thy hired servants. And he arose and came to his father.

But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight, and am

no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him.

Put a ring on his hand, shoes on his feet, and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it. Let us eat and be merry, for this my son was dead, and is alive again. He was lost and disfound, and they began to be merry." This message was born in Africa.

In 1967, I went to Africa to preach the first time. I spent five weeks in Tanzania in the bush country, and we traveled in a British Land Rover over a thousand miles of country where there wasn't any roads. We eventually built 15 churches in that area, where today there is 3,000 Holy Ghost filled believers.

But in that land, my friend had trained men, had disciplined 20 preachers. And we set the time for my coming, and he said to them, We'll be in a certain area these days, and you meet us there. Let the people know.

And in that wilderness, you'd see a house just once in a while. But under trees, we would preach to 60 to 150 people, which would be comparable to seeing 25,000 people in a city here in America. But there in that land, the first time I'd ventured out of this country to preach, and the poverty of those people was such that it made me physically ill.

I had so much, and they had nothing. The 8 out of 10 of the babies died before they got to be 3 years old. The average age was 29 years old.

They never had a decent meal from the time they got up in the morning, precious, wonderful people. But their entire day was spent just trying to find enough food to keep alive. And seeing that, I became physically ill and came aside to pray.

And while I was there praying, God dealt with my heart and said, There is nothing you can do about their poverty. There's 20 million of them. But He said, I wanted you to see it.

And I said to Him, Why would you want me to see something that you say I can do nothing about? He said, Because the poverty you see physically in these people is the poverty I see spiritually in my church. And you can do something about it. It was there on the side of that hill that this message was born, the Prodigal Church.

And I think I can prove to you that He's not talking just about a Jewish boy that lost his way, but He's talking about a church. Every preacher that's ever preached this message says that the Father here is God. Isn't that right? They'll preach to you that the Father is God, but there the tale usually goes in a different direction.

But God had two sons. The Old Testament son, Israel, wandered to Babylon, and the New Testament son wandered to Rome. Amen.

And here as we deal with this and look at this today, we'll discover that it's a church that God is dealing with and that it's a church that must be corrected. And if we'll heal the church, we'll heal this land. No civilization ever failed until its church failed.

The fountainhead of society is the church of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the condition of the world is only mirrored by the condition of the church. If the world is sick, it's because the church is sick. Heal the church.

Turn on the lights. And the bugs will leave our street. You'll find it'll be a safe place for our women and children again if we have an old-fashioned Holy Ghost revival.

We've got a lot of religion, but no life. The Bible said in Him was life, and that life was the life of men. It talks about evil men, but men love darkness rather than light.

Isn't that right? Men love darkness rather than light. If you really turn the lights on, then the bugs leave the streets. It'll become a safe place for our children and our women.

But the church must be dealt with. He said in I Peter 4, 17, that judgment must first begin where? At the house of God. Correct the head, and it'll eventually work out to the feet where everything else will be all right.

There, God dealt with me as I saw this thing, just like on a panoramic screen. God let me see the church, and let me see what it was. Hear the story.

It says, and you've got the story of Pentecost and everything that goes with it. This young man rose up in our story and said to the Father, demanded of Him, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And the Bible used strange language there.

It said it divided unto them His living. Now, how do you use the plural and the singular in one line unless you're dealing with that many-membered body, the church of the Lord Jesus Christ? He dealt unto them His living. Now, I know there's a lot of preachers that have made this a very wicked boy when he rose up to demand the inheritance that was his.

But let me remind you the Bible said the Holy Ghost is the earnest of our inheritance. And Jesus said in Matthew 11 that the violent take it by force. No man ever got anything from God by tucking his head under an altar.

It's the people that lay hold of God. Amen. This young man rose up, that young church, I believe he's talking about at Pentecost, and rose up for the inheritance that was theirs, the mighty Holy Spirit without which we cannot evangelize, and which the church is only a congregation without the Holy Spirit.

That church rose up on the day of Pentecost and demanded that inheritance. And it said the Father gave Him that which was His. And from that day He moved out, and the history of Pentecost over the next 33 years, they did more to evangelize their world in the 33 years after Pentecost than we've done with all of our machinery in the 2,000 years that followed.

When Paul died, he actually believed that the gospel had got to every part of the world. They planted the church along the major highways of Europe, and across the earth they preached the gospel, and planted the church without print and press, without radio, without television. They carried the gospel to the doorstep of the world.

That inheritance God gave them, and with that inheritance they moved out to startle the world. Any of the most common reader of the Bible, you begin in the book of Matthew, when you get to the second chapter of the book of Acts, you are aware that something took place that day that saved Christianity from oblivion. Ordinary men become extraordinary.

Unsure men became sure men. You know why? They were sure of God. Hallelujah! I said they were sure of God.

They were full of God. They moved out of that upper room to challenge an unbelieving world. And in 33 years they brought an empire to its knees.

You know, God showed me at one time, at one time I was on nearly every major city in this country on television. We were all across this land, and I thought the only thing needed was you and I to get on there, and we were going to solve all problems. But never been a time when we've had more religion than we've got now, and never was a time when the nation went to hell any faster than it is now.

In the last decade, according to Reader's Digest, one in seven has become a homosexual. Violent crimes rose 270%. We aborted a million and a half babies last year, and the half of it has not been told, with more religion than we've ever had in our history.

You know, God said to me, Son, I've never had any trouble getting it out. It's getting it in that's been my problem. Find me a vessel I can put it in.

He'll get it out. When that wind blew through the upper room on the day of Pentecost, the Bible said there was somebody outside that upper room from every nation under heaven. God made the arrangements to take it somewhere, and I promise you if we'll let Him fill us like He wants to fill us, God will see that it gets where it ought to go.

Because I can tell you this right now, if the Holy Ghost could come to this camp meeting like He really wants to come, ABC, CBS, and NBC would be out here to see what's going on. Well, hallelujah! That young church rose up and demanded its inheritance, and the Bible said God gave it to them and it spread out across that world with a gospel raising the dead, healing the sick, casting out devils, bringing an empire to its knees. But in 30 years from Pentecost, Jude is writing for God to give the faith that was once delivered to the saints.

Something, erosion has set in. There's a backsliding begun. They begin to lose out.

It wasn't long, that young son, the Bible said, went into a far country. Whenever the Bible talks about a far country, He's talking about that country other than the church. The world, that's what He's talking about.

And that young church moved into the world with a gospel that stirred men for God. But it wasn't long, the Bible says, till it began to waste its substance in riotous living, fleshly living. That's what He's talking about, fleshly living.

It wasn't long. You know, Paul died. He wrote 1 and 2 Timothy.

That's the last books that Paul wrote. Paul wrote and died, and 30 years later, John the Apostle wrote and died. After that, you've got the writings of the Father and the machinery of right reverends and popes and bishops and prelates took the place of the mighty Holy Ghost of God.

It become nothing but a religious machine without the power of Almighty God. They wasted their living, their substance rather, in riotous living. That young son, that young church that once such a vigorous thing, now has been reduced to poverty.

There's no picture of the church on earth like the Samson in the Bible. There you've got that man of God. What used to be like him? Thousand men with a jawbone of a donkey.

He used to stay in those Lehi Mountains and as those caravans of the Philistines, the enemies would come along, he'd pounce on them, spoil them and give the spoil to the people of God. But one day he compromised that place, got his eyes punched out, he put his head in a lap of the world. He got to thinking that you can have God and this rotten world at the same time.

But the Bible said, if you love the world, you're an enemy of God because that world's an enemy of God. And the Bible teaches us, if it teaches us anything, that the baptism of the Holy Ghost is the life of God. Is that right? In Romans 8 and 2 it said, the spirit of life, talking about the Holy Ghost.

When you receive the baptism of the Holy Ghost, what that young church received, you've received the spirit of life. Whose life? God's life. If it's God's life, it's God's nature.

And so the greatest evidence of whether you're full of the Holy Ghost or not is not whether you talk in tongues, but do you act like God? If it's the nature of God, if it's the life of God, it's the nature of God. And if it's the nature of God, then I ought to act like God. Do you know what that means? I ought to weep over what God weeps over and I ought to shout over what God shouts over and I ought to be happy at what makes God happy.

I ought to hate what God hates. I'm talking about that inheritance. That young church moved out without inheritance.

But it wasn't long, the Bible said, until they began to waste it in flesh, began to try to scheme how to run the church. Instead of waiting on God, every evidence in the Bible, it said they were in fastings often. Do you know what that meant? They were waiting before God to see which way that clouds are going.

They're not trying to draw a plan up for God. They're trying to find the leadership of the Holy Spirit. They walk with God.

They perform the works of God. And the world was startled by the actions of the church. But when they moved into a religious machine, they lost God.

They wasted their substance in riotous living. Samson there began to compromise with the world, got his eyes punched out. He couldn't see anything.

Did you ever see such a day as we see? I've talked to people. I preach on television, the radio. Used to be on much more than now.

I get letters all over. Amen. I don't see anything wrong with this.

You know why? They punch the eyes out. Can't see sin at all. I mean, can't see sin at all.

Why, we've got a church that lives just like the world, entertained just like the world. They'll giggle the same thing the world giggles at. I'll tell you, if you pull the cover off the church, there's enough sin in there to make grown men vomit.

Oh, my. When you consider, here he is, his eyes punched out, him that used to, armies were afraid of. Now, they got him grinding at the devil's mill.

Grinding at the devil's mill. That's the type of the church. Didn't you see the Pentecostal church born in the fires of Pentecost? Hypocrites falling dead at their altars.

Dead folks being raised to life. Blind folks are seeing. Thousands confessing.

And the Bible said a world, fear has come on it. I said, fear has come on it. But now the eyes are out, and it's grinding at the devil's mill.

One, two little songs, a sermonette, are offering, preaching, tired and teaching sick. No wonder the young people are not there. They can sit at home and look at their watch and know when the mockingbird's going to sing, when the little sermonette's going to be given.

A man blind grinding around a religious mill. Let me tell you something, folks. When the Holy Ghost is in charge, it's a different thing.

Wasted his substance. Righteous living. Wind up grinding around at a religious mill.

Said he woke up. Woke up. Everything's gone.

Wasted everything. His inheritance the Father gave him is gone. He's in a strange land, and he's broke.

And to top it all off, there's a famine in that land. And said he began to be in want. He began to be in want.

There's nothing more sad on this earth than a church that once knew God that don't know God. There's nothing more tragic than to see a church that once blazed with the fire of God, but now is nothing but empty mockery of what God had them to be. That's what the prophet was saying on the top of karma.

He said, let the God that answers by fire, let Him be God. He's talking to a people that once knew God and all the power of rolling back waters of Red Sea, dumping out manna from heaven, water coming from a rock, kicking down walls of Jericho, raising people from the dead. He's talking to a people that knew Him, but now is nothing but a form of religion.

And he's saying, let the God that answers by fire be God. Let's get God back into this thing. Amen.

Let's get God. That's what he's saying. Oh, my, nothing's sadder than a church that's lost its way.

The famine has come. Everything's lost. And the Bible says that young son, that church woke up.

The Holy Ghost is gone. The devil's crowding him. Everything has been spent.

And said he joined himself to a citizen of this world. This is the saddest part of the story. I wish I didn't have to tell it.

I said I wish I didn't have to tell it. But the Bible said he joined himself to a citizen of this world. Amen.

He went and knocked on the devil's door. That's what he did. Here it is, the church of the living God, the very vessel of the Lord, the body of Christ, the temple of the Holy Ghost, knocking on the door of a world begging for its help.

He knocked on that door. That son of Satan opened the door and said, What do you want? He said, Would you give me something to eat, sir? Give you something to eat? Nothing, boy. If you eat here, you

find a slop, swill, whatever you call it, and you go out there and feed them hogs and come back here.

Oh, no, sir, he said. I'm a Jewish lad, and we don't fool with hogs. That's against my religion.

And he slammed that door in his face. And that devil of appetite began to beat him. His head is spinning for hunger.

Amen. The devil telling him he's going to die. And so he wraps on the door again.

The man opens the door, and he said, Oh, well, I'll feed your hogs. Let me tell you something. When that church knocked on the door of that world and begging it for ideas of how to build a church, that world said to it, I'll help you, boy.

You can build that church like I built this supermarket. Amen. You can sell that Jesus like I sell this soap.

I can tell you how to do it. And the smart boys of Fifth Avenue moved in. But they said, There's just one little thing about it, church.

We'll help you. We'll tell you how to run a rummage sale that you can build and get them new pews. And we'll tell you how to run a promotion campaign that you can get more folks in, you can seat in.

But they said, There's just one thing I want to tell you. If we do that, you're going to feed our hogs. You're going to live like we do.

We're not going to be embarrassed by you. You're not going to bring any conviction and make me feel bad. Your daughter's going to dress like our daughters.

Your boy's going to go where we go. And you're not going to be any different than we are. And you can't tell the difference between the church and the world.

I said, You're going to feed our hogs. And you feed our hogs, and we'll tell you how to run this thing. We know about this promotion.

You know, when I was on TV all over, I had folks coming everywhere. There's an unsaved crowd up in Boston. You get many of them appeal letters and got Boston stamped on it.

I can tell you the evangelist never saw it. No, no, he never saw it, brother. Ain't nothing about faith but that.

That's a bunch of unsaved Jewish folks that know how to write letters. And they pick up about 15 percent of the take for writing that letter and doing that promotion. I know.

They knocked on my door. And they said, Reverend, we can help you put this over. Yes, sir.

We can help you. We know how to write them letters. I said, We know how to touch the heart of that housewife, and she fundamentally is going to be the one.

Why, boy, he said, we sell her new soap every week. Amen. We can get her on your side.

I said, Well, I'll tell you what, if the Holy Ghost don't put her on my side, I'd be in trouble with her anyway. I believe I'll just leave it. Now, I could have went that route and been there today.

I don't mind telling you. Amen. Could have been that way.

But you know what they wanted out of me. They said, Now, look, there's one thing, though. If we're going to write you letters, we don't want you preaching on there like you're preaching.

Amen. You don't have to say what you're saying. There's things that you can say that the public will like to hear.

I said, Tell me about it. Yes, sir. I just do believe you're right.

There's some things they don't want to hear, but there's some things they ought to hear. This young man knocked on the door. He said, You feed my hogs, boy.

You quit living different from me. I know you don't eat swine, but you'll eat swine if you hang around here. I know there's certain places you don't like to go, but you'll go, and I'll help you, and you'll find that I can do a better job for you in any way you're doing it.

He said, But I want you to know you're going to live like we live. I don't want to be embarrassed and feel bad about what I'm doing. You make me look bad, so you just feed my hogs, and I'll help you out of this streak.

Amen. That's what he said, and the church began to knock. Let me tell you, when we lost the Holy Ghost, when we lost the move of God's Spirit, instead of calling the church back to the altar to be refilled with the Holy Ghost, what did we do? We called a committee.

Amen. We got ahold of business heads. Amen.

How can we do this? How can we put the church over? I'll tell you how we can put the church over. Keep the church full of God. Boy, I'll feed you, but you feed my hogs.

You go and feed my hogs. You know, I went to Beaumont. I began in that church 25 years ago.

I didn't know anybody there. I'd been an evangelist for three years. I had to leave a job to be an evangelist.

And after three years, I got revival meetings in some of our biggest churches, and now God is saying for me to go to Beaumont, Texas and build a church. I'd never been there. I don't know nobody there.

It's harder for me to write them letters and tell them preachers I wasn't coming to them meetings than it was to leave that job in the first place. But you know, I got there, rented a little ten building, and started having church. I mean, we was having church.

We folks began to gather in, and a few folks come in, and they had all kinds of ideas of how we could make that work. And one lady, she wanted to have a chicken dinner sale. Amen.

Now, that's a first and a last. And I want to tell you, I don't care how many you have. That's your business.

But I ain't selling nothing. Amen. I mean, I went downtown with one of them tickets, and there's a man in a suit salesman.

I went in there, and I told him, I said, We're going to, we've got some chicken dinners coming off here. And he said, We deliver them for this price. He cussed.

He said, I don't want none of your tickets. He said, You bunch of hypocrites. He said, You're tax exempt.

You get chicken give to you, and you'll sell that chicken for half price to me, all right. And said, The man down there paying his taxes and trying to keep business, losing business. I know you ain't going to buy none of my suits, but I ain't buying none of your chicken, I'll tell you that.

Amen. I said, Let me tell you something, mister. I'll give you one of these chicken dinners, but I want you to know that's the best sermon I've had preached to me.

There won't be no more supporting God by selling anybody's chicken. Amen. There won't be no rummage sales.

If we got any old clothes, we're going to give them to the poor, not sell them to Him. And if we got any extra chicken, we're going to feed the poor. But God ain't poor.

I don't have to go around begging the world to put pews in my church. I said, I'll sit on the floor before I ask the devil to contribute to that church. Well, hallelujah, God's bigger than the devil.

Oh, I said, the Bible said we just owe them the gospel. That's all. They don't owe us nothing.

Give no quarters nowhere. Amen. Give no quarters nowhere.

Preach the gospel. I can remember a time when the church was full of God, and it first started out, you know, we got this naked trend coming to America. Amen.

You go into a place, young lady working there, halfway to her hips, and she'd try to pull it down. Any more, they'd roll it up from the top. Amen.

The less Holy Ghost there was around, the less restraint there was on anything. After eating, they'll kill you for four bits of half-cash on the street. There's not anything to restrain them out there.

The only Holy Ghost there is is the Holy Ghost in the church. That's all. I know He's everywhere, but I'm talking about the ability to work, to save, to heal, to fill, to put restraint on the night.

It's the Holy Ghost that's in us. That young man, I can see that young church. You feed my hogs, boy, and I'll feed you.

You'll do good here. You'll do good here, but do with them religious convictions. Nobody expects you to live like I do, to hurt a thing, to drink a little liquor.

Amen. Why, don't worry about that tobacco. Everybody does that.

Why, the dance halls are playing. I said, folks, have a good time. Don't worry about it.

Just go on and feed the hogs, son, and you'll find plenty to eat at this table. The Bible said he got that slop, and he's out there in that hog pen. And the Bible said he would fain fill his belly with a husk of them hogs.

Can't you see him there? Fine young man. Must have had a wonderful father. That old rotten piece of meat out of that slop can.

And he's just about to put it in his mouth. My gracious alive. He's about to eat that slop.

Amen. I've seen the church eat worse than that, folks. I said, I've watched the church eat worse than that.

Amen. I've watched it reduce itself to nothing. Amen.

But the Bible said just before he would eat that. Amen. He came to himself.

He came to himself. Oh, hallelujah. Just before.

You know what the Bible says? Jesus said, He that believeth on me, as the Scripture said, out of his belly will flow rivers of living water. You know what that says? That the spirit, the belly, is referred to as the spirit. Amen.

You're never devil possessed until the devil touches your spirit. The soul can be allied with evil. You take Judas Iscariot.

He walked along with the devil. He plotted with the devil how to do away with Jesus. But at any point, up to the 22nd chapter of the Gospel of Luke, he could have walked away from that devil.

But the Bible said in the 22nd chapter of the Gospel of Luke that the devil entered Judas Iscariot. That is, it touched his spirit. If he ever gets loose from that devil, somebody's going to have to loose him now.

Amen. When it touches that spirit, and the Bible said just before it touched his belly, he'd come alive. There'd come a revelation from God.

You know, today in religion, folks, you've got extremes both ways. I'm talking about Pentecost. That's all I know anything about.

I've never been anywhere else. I was a heathen until I was 27. When I was born again, I was born again among holy roll of folks.

I've never known anything but Pentecostal people in my religious life. And I know there's two very deafened extremes in it today. Both of them are in death.

You've got the old-line Pentecostal crowd, wonderful people have been, but old-line that have been dead for years and don't know it. They talk in tongues and talk in tongues. You know, I've sang the songs that we sing for all the years that I've been saved.

And I never consciously tried to memorize them songs, but we sing them so much that I know them. You can't hardly open up one of them books and begin to sing a song that I can't sing it verse by verse without. That book, we just sing them so much.

Well, the same thing happened. You talk in tongues, you talk in tongues. Some of it registers on the plastic cell of your brain, and just because off the top of your head you can spiel off a little bit, you think you're still full.

But how long has it been since you felt that river gurgling and bubbling and moving and breaking out and had an open air? Ten thousand people gathered, since there was such a power of God that not one but scores of people as far away as ten miles. Now imagine, I imagine that put us about downtown Louisville from here maybe, ten miles. But ten miles away, people would come out in the evenings just to walk around in the yard and would fall out like they had a heart attack and they'd gather them up trying to get them to a hospital, think they're dying, and they'd come to screaming for mercy.

The power of God so strong that it'd reach out ten miles away and be slain by the power of God. And said in the middle of that meeting, ten thousand people present, in 1922 when the Pentecostal revival that was born in 1906 in Azusa Street was right at its apex, he stood up and prophesied and said the present revival will die. But in the mid-forties, now this is 1922, he said in the mid-forties, there will be men raised up with a message of deliverance.

But he said there'll be so much emphasis placed on the physical that God will withdraw himself from that revival in the late fifties. And the sixties will be marked by political and religious confusion like the world has never known. But in the late seventies or early eighties, he said just before he comes back, they're going to turn back to hear the Word of God.

Hallelujah! He said they're going to turn back. Folks, I can look at that prophecy. That revival did die.

And in the mid-forties, he did raise them up. And that healing meeting did come to a place that if you didn't have a tumor, ain't no new you going. And the sixties were marked with the Vietnams and the confusion of religious and politics.

And today they are a people saying, where does the answer lie? You know what's happening? Just before they swallowed that devil's slop, amen, there come a revelation. They came, they saw. And you know what they saw? Why, in my Father's house there's bread enough to spare.

I don't have to live off the slop of a religious world. God has more than enough. He said why.

He threw that down. He said in my Father's house, even the servants got better than this. He said, I know what I'm going to do.

I'm going to climb out of this hog pen and I'm going to go back to my Father. And when I see Him, I'm going to tell Him that I've sinned against You in heaven. I'm not worthy to call of Your Son, but let me stay in the barn, Papa.

Let me stay in the servants' quarter. I don't want no more of that world. And I don't want no more of that just religion.

I want You. And I'm going to tell Him that, amen. I'm going to tell Him that.

And there's millions of people around this world today waiting to hear the sound, this is the way, walk you in it. Amen. He climbed over that hog pen and headed back home.

And I believe that Father, ever since that church or that young son has strayed, has been a-watching across those balconies of heaven. Amen. I believe He's been a-watching, just waiting one turn, just one indication that you and I are willing to turn back and let Christ be the sum of the total.

Amen. That's all. Let me tell you something.

You give the slightest indication that you want God and He'll come better than halfway. Just look like you want to repent. Our church just look like we want to be what God is.

I believe that, Father. I, in my heart, I can see Him as He watched that young son in the church as it coming up that road, swarm of flies on it, hog, the smell of a hog pen. Amen.

All over it. He said, it looks like my boy. But surely not.

Look like his hair's all matted up. That filthy garment, that, it is my boy. And the Bible said, the Bible said that that father ran and fell on his neck and kissed that boy.

Let me tell you something, folks. I can understand it. He'd have got up up there where he was and said, Now, son, look, you run and take a bath.

And we still got some of the old clothes in the, in the, in the closet there. Run, get yourself cleaned up and change your clothes and come back out here and talk to you, Papa. No, that ain't what he did.

He fell on his neck, hog pen and all. Thank God. Hallelujah.

He loves you, church. I said, He loves you. He loves you.

Hallelujah. He's not waiting on you to clean up. He'll clean you up.

He said he fell on his neck, hog pen and all, and kissed him. Glory to God. I read the story of Samuel Hopkins Hadley, the greatest apostle to an outcast world that ever been.

He is saved in that Pacific Garden missions in Chicago. Said when he waked up, Mel Trotter had his head in his lap, and he'd passed out out there as freezing cold, freezing cold, and he would have froze to death. But said when he, I opened his eyes, Mel Trotter, who himself had been a drunk, was, saw he was alive, he kissed him on the cheek.

Hadley said, That's the first human kiss me since my mother. Amen. That old alcoholic got saved.

And when he died, they had a mound of flowers half as big as this tent, and drew a bigger crowd than when the mayor died. Amen. Oh, listen.

Hadley, Hadley, born of God, when the Lord Jesus came to him and lifted him out of it. Amen. And he found that God loved him.

He said to Mel Trotter, Had nobody ever kissed me. Why did you kiss me? He said, Because I loved you. And when I saw you was alive, I was so moved.

And he told him about Jesus loving him. Thank God. Look, he said he fell on that boy.

Hog bin, filth, all of it. You can't get clean enough. Only Jesus can clean you.

And he's saying to the church, If you'll turn from that world, if you'll turn from that cheap system, if you'll turn back to reality, he's ready, he's ready. He fell on his neck and kissed him. And then the boy done rehearsed his prayer.

He said, Father, I've sinned against heaven and in thy sight. I'm not worthy to be called your son. He said, Put my ring on his finger.

You know what that ring, see, that symbolizes the son. Amen. You know, that's authority, and that's the symbol of a son.

When he said, I'm not worthy to be your son, he said, Put my ring on his finger. Amen. Make me as one of your hired servants.

Put a robe on his back. Amen. Put him in a barn.

Put shoes on his feet. For a new walk in the Spirit of God. Kill the fatted calf.

This boy's starving to death. He's been fed the Reader's Digest pip and squint and every other kind of political deal. He needs a good gospel steak.

Set him down and feed him. Thank God. Put shoes on his feet.

Cover up that hog bin with the righteousness of Christ. Put a ring on his finger. Shoes on his feet.

For a new walk in the Holy Ghost. Oh, how much he loves us. When that church turned back, that father ran to meet her.

There is no expression of God on this earth but the church. We are built together for a habitation of God by the Spirit. There is no other way that God expresses Himself.

The church is the vehicle of expression. Hallelujah. We're not here, folks, to instruct folks on how to be healed.

We're here to heal them. When they came to Jesus, they didn't come to get instructions on how to be healed. They didn't come to get any lessons in hygiene.

They came for Him to heal them. Amen. And the Bible said He healed them.

And He said to that church, When you go, heal the sick, cleanse the leper, raise the dead. But you see, the problem, if we're not careful, you let Him work one miracle through us, we tell it three times and the world thinks we've done it. You know, when that first group come back, 70 of them, they said to Him, Lord, devils are subject to us.

Why, we're going to cast them out right and left. You know what the first words He said to them were? I saw Satan call his lightning. You know what He was saying? Boys, I'm sending you the same pride I saw in the devil.

That cost him his place in heaven. Now, you don't rejoice about devils. They weren't subject to you.

They're subject to me. I'm in you, see. So you rejoice about having your name linked up with me.

And as long as you keep it that way, them devils will be subject. But if you ever lose that, you won't handle devils no more. Because the devil is only subject to me.

You see, you are the vehicle for me to live in. And when it ceases to be that, when the Holy Ghost is not there, when we're no longer the vessel of the Lord, then you and I, instead of going back to God, we begin to rap on the door of that world. And we've barred its help.

And you know and I know that 95% of what the church does, it could do if God died. That's right. If God died tomorrow, we'd still have church and carry on with religion for the most part.

Be very little we do we couldn't do if there wasn't no God. We've got our own little do-it-yourself religion. I read one time in the 14th chapter of the book of Matthew where Jesus walked on that water.

Those fellows, He had fed the multitude. And before He fed the multitude, the preacher said to them, Send them away. They're going to faint.

He said, No, give them something to eat. What's 200 penny worth among that crowd? Set them down. Barred the boy's little lunch.

Broke it up. Fed that crowd. Then did to the preachers what they wanted to do to the people.

He sent them away. Yeah, He did to the preacher what they wanted to do to the people. Sent them away.

They got in a boat and the Bible said He went to pray. And they rowed all night. Never got away.

There's a shore right there. They rowed all night. Got nowhere.

The waves are tossing. Look like they're going to drown. They've tried every Sunday school contest.

Every little do-it-yourself. But nobody's coming. We're getting nowhere.

They're in a row and they're just about ready to give up. About ready to drop the oars in the boat and give up. And about that time, He come walking on them waters.

Amen. There comes Jesus. Fourth watch in the morning.

And they said, It's an aberration. That's what it is. It's a ghost.

He said, No. Don't be afraid, boys. It's Me.

And you know I read that one time. I read it many times. But one time when I read it, the Holy Ghost said to me, You know what He's saying to them walking on that water? He's saying, Boys, everything that's over your head is under My feet.

If you'll put down your little toys of religion, I'll walk with you. Everything that's over your head is under My feet. I can handle it.

And when that prodigal said, I'm going back home. I'm going back to my father. I'm tired of this religion.

I'm tired of these three little old songs and a sermonette, preaching tired and teaching sick. Amen. I'm tired of it.

I'm going back to God. There's got to be more than that. The newsman down in my hometown, he died now.

But when I first went there and got on television, he was an atheist. But you know, he got to liking me. And we went into the studio for years to make those programs.

And when we'd be in there, he'd watch us. We'd make them at night. We had to make them at night.

He'd be there for the 10 o'clock news, and he'd watch them. Finally, he got to moving toward me a little. I got to talking to him.

And he said, You know, when I was a boy, I was an altar boy in the church. And he said, When I was 11 years old, one day I was working there. And I said to myself, Ralph, if there ain't no more to God than what you're doing, it ain't worth your time anyway.

And he said, I walked out of there. I said, There ain't no God. Amen.

If this is all there is to God, it's me lighting a candle every now and then. I don't want no God. And he said, I walked out, and I never did believe in God until you folks got to coming down there in that studio.

And he said, I got a feeling of something. He said, I believe there may be a God. You know, I led him to the Lord.

Amen. Before he died, he was writing a story about me. When he died, he died suddenly, and I was overseas and wasn't able to go to his funeral.

But you know what? It was reality, reality. I believe everybody has a right to reject or accept God on the grounds of reality. Do you believe that? Say hallelujah.

I believe everybody. When God said to the prophet Elijah, You go and want that boy Elijah to be prophet in your room. He's plowing with 12 yoke of oxen.

He's plowing that corn, and the old man come through the fence behind him, walked up past that mantle over him. Oh my, it went up and down, and he dropped the plow lines. And he said to the old man, Let me go tell mom and dad goodbye.

I'm going with you. And the old man said, What have I got to do with you, boy? Amen. He's going to give him every opportunity to turn back.

He said, What have I got to do with you? And the boy went back. He killed them oxen, barbecued them with the plows, had a big meal and took off after that preacher. Eight years, Edgar Bethany said he followed him.

Eight years, finally, on the far side of Jordan, the old man said, What do you want out of me, boy? He said, I want a double portion of what I felt eight years ago. Reality, reality. He said, I want a double portion of what I felt back there in that cotton patch.

He said to him, You've asked a hard thing, boy. Nevertheless, if you see me when I go, I'll give it to you. Oh, that tells you something, folks.

Diligence. Diligence. From then on, you know, he never let a tree get between him and that old man.

He'd lay down to sleep at night. He'd have a hand on him, slide his stirrer. But he was up feeling for him, watching for him.

Never let him out of his sight. Amen. If you see me when I go, he said.

The diligence. Let me tell you, the careless don't have this. I said, the careless don't have this.

This isn't for the world. It isn't for the unsaved. This is for the people of God.

These are for those that walk with God. It's not to be squandered in riotous living. It's to be God living in me.

Wherever I am, wherever you are, when you get back to that home, that job, wherever you are, God ought to be there because you're there. That's what it's all about. Heal that church.

Turn that prodigal back from that hog pen of just religion. Let him walk again with God. And the world will be brought to a place of acknowledging the reality.

The holy goal is to lift up a standard against the night. And if Jesus tears our streets, we'll be safe again. Hallelujah.

Let's stand and praise God here tonight. Lift up your hands this afternoon. Let's worship God.

Let's worship God. We'll bring this tape to a close. Get the brother to cut it off back there.

Hallelujah. Hallelujah. Thank you, Jesus.

Thank you, Jesus. Glory to God. Hallelujah.

Hallelujah. Oh, hallelujah. Hallelujah.

Thank you, Lord. Thank you, Lord. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you, Jesus. Glory.

Glory. Glory. Glory.

Glory. Glory. Glory.

Hallelujah. Hallelujah. Oh, Jesus.

Jesus. Jesus. Jesus.

Jesus. Glory to God. Oh, I love you, Jesus.

Love you, Jesus. Love you, Jesus. Praise Him, folks.

I tell you, I see the ark coming up the road. God is about to do something. God is about to do something.

There's a people whose heart is hungry for God. Hungry for God. Hallelujah.

Hallelujah. Oh, blessed be the name of the Lord. Oh, hallelujah, hallelujah.

Glory to God.

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