

Boldness

by Bill McLeod

Bill McLeod's sermon emphasizes the importance of boldness in evangelism, rooted in a clear conscience, knowledge of Scripture, prayer, and fellowship with Jesus.

Duration: 42:55

Topics: "Boldness"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares a story about a man conducting a neighborhood survey. The man visits a house where the owner has been living for 18 years and plans to live there for the rest of his life. The speaker then asks if the owner can hear anything burning, relating it to a story of a man who didn't realize his house was on fire. The speaker emphasizes the importance of knowing the Word of God and how it empowers Christians to share the gospel. He mentions examples of Hindu and Muslim children who memorize their religious texts and encourages Christians to spend quality time alone with God, as worshipping Him precedes working for Him.

Transcript

In Acts chapter 4 it says, When they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marveled, they marveled. And they took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus. That's the only way they could explain how these unlettered, ignorant men could speak as boldly as they were speaking.

They had been with Jesus. As Christian workers, Christian people, often we're so tactful, we never have any contact with people. I remember once talking to some people who were taking a friendship evangelism course in their church, and they told me after two years in the course, they hadn't talked to a single soul yet.

They were learning how to do it carefully, without antagonizing people, but they weren't really learning how to do it at all, and they were quite discouraged at this, and about ready to throw in the towel. There's a place for tact, of course. The servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, that God perhaps will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth, and that they may recover themselves, the Greek word there is awake, out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.

So the servant of the Lord, we're not to go like a bull in the china shop, we're not to grab ahold of people and holler at them, this kind of thing, we're supposed to be very gentle, but you can be very bold and very gentle at the same time. The servant of the Lord must not strive, don't get involved in arguments, you have to be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, and I like the next word, patient, it takes a lot of patience. And then it says, and I like these three words, in meekness instructing, well two words, meekness and instructing.

So if we understand this from 2 Timothy chapter 2, 23 and 4, even though we may be very bold, we will not be rambunctious. Now there are certain things in the New Testament, and the Old Testament as well, mostly in the New, that tell us how to become a bold person. For example, Proverbs 28, verse 1 says, Our righteous are bold as a lion.

Why? Because everything's right between themselves and God, between themselves and other people, there's nothing troubling their conscience, because if there's something troubling your conscience, it undermines you, it shoots you down. Maybe it's your wife, or your husband, there's a relationship that isn't the way it ought to be, and if we don't deal with it, we'll not be bold. Because our conscience plagues us.

God speaks to us. The righteous are bold as a lion. Do you remember in 1 Peter 3, it says, Husbands, draw with your wives according to knowledge.

I think he means by this. According to the knowledge we get from reading the word of God, the relationship between husband and wife. Giving honor unto the wife is unto the weaker vessel, and is being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers be not hindered.

It's the same word, hindered, that Paul used when he said we would have come unto you, even I, Paul, once and again, but Satan hindered us. And so, roadblocks get thrown up in the way. If there's some person, some people, some organization maybe, that I don't have a good fellowship with, a right relationship with, you've got to take care of it.

A friend of mine had bought a Caliper tractor, he was a large farmer. They farmed a lot of land, he and his brothers and his dad. And just after the machine was off the warranty, they had a major breakdown, which would cost them \$1,200 or \$1,400.

So being a very sharp mechanic, he took the mechanism apart and put it back so it was still under warranty. And he got away with it. I mean, the company, you know, the rationalization was, you know, international, well these people are loaded, you know.

It's like people who work at a place, you know, and they rationalize, they take toilet paper home, and they take soap home, and all kinds of stuff home, and they say, I'm not stealing, I'm just subsidizing my income. But God doesn't look at it that way. And dear people, these little foxes, they spoil the vines, the vines are all bleeding.

We never get anywhere because we allow things like this to creep in and to cripple us. So deal with anything, even now as I'm speaking, God may be raising something in your mind and you're trying to knock it down. Be very careful.

Don't violate your conscience. It's a God-implanted thing. And Paul used the phrase in Romans 9, he said, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit works in our conscience. It's a very delicate mechanism. Don't garbage it, don't fool around with it and hurt it, which you can do.

So the righteous are bold in the line, there's an old saying, it's not in the Bible, but it's true, his strength was as a strength of ten, because his heart was pure. James 1.8 says, a double-minded man is unstable in all his ways. And James 4.8 tells us why he's unstable.

Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. He's double-minded because there's sin in his life. And he can't be righteous, he can't, that is, he can be righteous, but he can't be as bold as a lion, as God wants him to be.

Then secondly, it's necessary, if I want to be a bold Christian, it's necessary that I get to know the Bible very well. You know, Apollos, it says about him, he was mighty in the Scriptures. And what did he do? He mightily convinced the Jews, showing by the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ.

And many Jews believe, as a result, his power was due to his knowledge of the Word of God. Many times, as Christians, we're afraid to get into the gospel thing because we don't know our Bibles well enough. I just read the other day a Hindu woman's testimony, she's now a Christian, when she was 8 years of age, she had memorized 18,000 verses from the Hindu Scriptures.

There's only 31,000 verses in the Bible, age 8. And you know, frequently, Muslim children, by the time they're 8 or 9, they know the whole Koran off by heart. But the average Christian, even if you offer them \$1,000, if you ask them on short notice, he probably could not accurately quote 50 verses from the Bible. And people, we've got to get to know this book.

Watchman Nee read 18 chapters of the New Testament every day. George Mueller read the Bible through from cover to cover 200 times. He read it through 100 times while on his knees, in the attitude of worship.

These were busy men. Finney and Moody both rose at 4 o'clock in the morning, read the Bible and prayed till 8 o'clock every morning. That was their program.

And they were both mighty in the Scriptures as a result. Although neither of them had the training in any institution as far as the Bible is concerned, for that matter, neither did Spurgeon. But he spent hours and hours and hours, these men did, with the Word of God.

It's a case of priorities. If we don't think it's necessary, we won't do it. But we need to do it, to be like Apollos, bold, mighty, mightily convincing people, because he knew the Word of God.

Then next, I would say prayer, and that's chapter 4. The apostles had been threatened. They went back to the church of Jerusalem, told them what the Sanhedrin council had said, and the church went to prayer. It's a short prayer, very short, but very powerful.

What did they pray for? They said, Lord, behold their threatenings, and grant unto thy servants that with all boldness they may speak your word. That's what they prayed for. Did they get it? That's verse 29.

Yes, they got it. Verse 31 says, they spoke the Word of God with boldness. They got exactly what they prayed for.

Sometimes people ask this question, you know in our church they'll say, we've been praying for four years for revival, I think we're further away from it now than when we started. How come this church in

Jerusalem did a mighty revival in just one prayer meeting? Ever wonder about that? I used to wonder about it. I don't anymore.

This was a revived church. This was a church walking in the Spirit. This was a church filled with the Spirit of God.

And when they prayed, I mean, heaven just broke loose on them. They didn't have to pray for four years and be further away than they had been before, which teaches us something as far as preparing a church for revival is concerned. So prayer.

Knowing the Word of God, prayer, a righteous life, and then, I would say, fellowship with Jesus Christ. To go back to our text again, when they saw the boldness of Peter and John and perceived their unlearned and ignorant men, they marveled and they took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus. Now we can't be with Jesus as they were.

That is not in the same sense. But in another sense, just as real, 2 Corinthians 3.18 says, But we all, with an unveiled face, the reference in the context was to Moses putting a veil over his face when he came down from the mountain. We all with an unveiled face, beholding as in a glass, I think the reference is to the Word of God.

Beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. People, as we expose ourselves to the Word of God, we see here the glory of Christ. We beheld, John said, we beheld His glory.

The glory is of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. We need to study the stories of Jesus in the Bible and spend time in prayer with Him. Prayer, after all, is fellowship with Christ.

He talked to His disciples, He said, Henceforth, from now on, I do not call you servants, for the servant does not know what his Lord is doing, but I have called you friends. And we are friends to Jesus. Let's give Him time.

Let's give Him quality time. Let's be alone with Him. Did you know in John chapter 4, there are ten references to worshiping God? In the same chapter, there are ten references to working for God, under different words like sowing, reaping, laboring, and so on.

But all ten references to worshiping God come before there's a single reference to working for God. And I think it's very significant because God is saying to us, you must learn to worship me because service rises out of worship. When I spend time with God, I can go forth with power from God because I've been alone with Him.

And then next, of course, and obviously, we need to be filled with the Spirit of God. Did you ever notice in Acts chapter 9, when God came to this man Ananias and asked him to go and pray for Paul, that his eyesight may be restored, Ananias didn't want to go. Lord, he said, I've heard by many of this man how much evil he's done to your saints at Jerusalem, and here also he's got authority from the chief priests to bind all who call in your name.

And the Lord said, go your way. He's a chosen vessel unto me, and he let Ananias know something of what he had in store for Saul, for Paul. But please notice this, that God told Ananias, He said, Saul has seen a man named Ananias, he's seen you coming in and laying your hand on him, that he might receive

his sight.

Ananias goes and he says, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto you in the way as you came, has sent me that you might receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Ghost. Why did they add that? Christ hadn't told him to do that. Dear people, he did that because that was a normal experience.

If you were a born-again believer, you needed to be filled with the Spirit of God, and Ananias understood that. He was not a preacher, he was just an ordinary Christian, but God used him. Actually, and you might take issue with me on this, I don't think Paul was converted until that day because Ananias said to Paul, and now why do you tarry, arise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.

So his sins were still not washed away, apparently, and Ananias knew it. So I would say that Paul was converted that particular time and then filled with the Spirit of God. Anyway, something to think about, may not be important.

In 2 Corinthians 3, Paul said, seeing then that we have such hope, we use great boldness of speech. What was the hope he was talking about? Look at the context. He was talking about the hope we have of the ministry of the Holy Spirit of God.

People were totally helpless without that, and were everything with that. When the Spirit is working, so because we know the Spirit is working, we use great boldness of speech. Make it plain.

I heard a rather ridiculous story about a fellow who came down a highway at night, and at the bottom of this hill there was a house, a three-story house, and it was on fire. The whole back was on fire, and he slowed down, and he saw a fellow sitting at the front by a window, by a light, reading a book. He didn't even know his house was on fire.

Now how would you handle that? You'd roar in there, I don't think you'd even bother ringing the doorbell, you'd roar in there hollering, fire, hey man, your house is on fire, wouldn't you? Well, this is not what happened in this story. The fellow rang the doorbell, and the fellow came, and he said, I'm conducting a neighborhood survey, I wonder if you'd mind answering a few questions. Well, the fellow said, I can give you 15 minutes.

Well, fine, fine, so they went and sat down, and the fellow said, now, first of all, how long have you lived in this house? And the fellow says, well, about 18 years. Is this part of your survey? Yes, yes, part of the survey. How long do you plan to live in this house? Well, what can I say, it's the rest of my life.

Why? Oh, never mind, never mind. Let me ask you a question, you might not think it's related at all, but this is an important question. Can you hear anything that might sound like something burning? The fellow listens, no, he was a little deaf, you know, couldn't hear a thing.

Then he says, I have another question, might not seem relevant, but he said, take a deep breath and see if you can smell anything that might smell a little bit like smoke. So the fellow takes a deep breath, no, he can't smell any smoke. Well, the fellow said, that's it, and he walks out the door muttering to himself, he goes back to his car, he says, what a stupid jerk, you know, he never caught on.

And dear people, listen, we're like that sometimes in talking to people about Christ, you know, we beat around the bush, we never get to it. You know, years ago I learned from a young Christian in my church,

he'd only been a Christian about a year, and he and I went so many together one night, and we're talking to a man 85. Well, I'm very diplomatic, you know, but I always get there, you know, well, maybe I should say almost always.

And so this kid got concerned, I guess he thought I was too diplomatic, so suddenly he turned to this old man and he said, are you saved going to heaven? No. Do you want to be? I don't know. Well, you'll go to hell if you don't.

Oh. Would you like to be saved? Yes. Yes.

Get on your knees. And I'm sitting here like a dumb boy, you know, watching this kid, and he leads into Christ. I think all of heaven was laughing, you know.

But people, we have, like I said at the outset, we have so much tact sometimes, we never get to it. As a young Christian, I called it a place, and I went there deliberately to try and win this Catholic couple to Christ. But they were such sweet people, such nice people.

I talked myself into thinking, well, they probably know the Lord. I didn't ask them. So I did what we often do when our conscience is killing us, I read the Bible and prayed.

And we were at the door, and the lady asked me a question, which led right into the gospel, and in 20 minutes I had them both on their knees accepting Christ. But afterwards she said to me, I'm glad she did, it embarrassed me, but God was teaching me something. And she said, if I had not asked you that question at the door, you would not have told us how to be saved, would you have? So we learn partly by our mistakes, don't we? Filled with the Spirit.

What happened to Paul when he was filled with the Spirit? If you read Acts chapter 9, twice it says. It says he preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus, then when he got to Jerusalem and the church there accepted him and recognized he was a true believer, then it says he preached boldly there. So boldly, the Grecians weren't about to kill him, and they had to get him away.

But he preached boldly, in the name of Jesus. One thing we should never do is apologize for preaching the truth. And listen, I used to tell my people, don't you ever apologize for anything I say.

I'll do my own apologizing, if I have to. But don't you apologize for me. You know, people go home and say, well, our pastor, he said it kind of, he doesn't normally preach this way and all.

They brought an unconverted person to the church and they're really concerned because the preacher was too bold. Well, dear people, if you're bold in a loving sense, it makes all the difference in the world. So people know whether you love them or not.

They can sense it. And if you're not loving, you kind of get another number on the roll, they'll sense that too. And they'll turn you down.

Many times the people are not turning our Christ down, they're turning us down. And there's a difference, filled with the Spirit. Then do you want to be bold? Become a deacon.

That's what the Bible says. I suppose we could say become a deaconess. In 1 Timothy chapter 3 it says, they that have used the office of a deacon well, purchased to themselves a good degree and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.

Where did that come from? Ever think about it? Do you know in the early church, in the centuries after the apostles, becoming a deacon was the first step towards becoming a preacher, a pastor, an elder. That's why it speaks about being a good degree, it meant a step forward towards the eldership. Now Spurgeon somehow got this mixed up and he had it the other way around.

First he became an elder, secondly he became a deacon. If you're a faithful elder, you could become a deacon. I don't know where he got that in the Bible, I love Spurgeon, but like the rest of us he's wrong sometimes I guess.

Purchased to themselves a good degree, a step forward, and great boldness. You know what's happened? We've followed up the office of a deacon. We've got them looking after widows in the church, that's fine, looking after commune and table, that's fine.

But that's not the whole story. Deacons need to be soul winners. And not like a little story I heard about a soul winning church, this family had moved away and in the church they left, the deacons sat at the front, and when people came forward the deacons were the ones that led them to Christ.

Many times there were people that a deacon had been sharing with the week before and he recognized this person and he would deal with that person and so on. Anyway, this family moved away and they were going to another church. And they came back to this church about a year later for a visit and the pastor saw them and said afterwards, how do you like it? In the church you're in, is it a good church? And this boy said, no, it's not.

He said, what don't you like about it? Well, he said, over there they don't have all the demons sitting in the front row. Well, I mean the kid got it mixed up a little bit, but in some churches it might not be so mixed up. But dear people, a deacon, Stephen and Philip were appointed with the seven, you remember? In Acts 6, what happened to Stephen? He became a flaming evangelist.

What happened to Philip? He became a flaming evangelist. That's what happened. Bold? You talk about bold preaching.

Wasn't it Stephen who said, uncircumcised in heart, which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? And they slain them who showed before of the coming of the just one, of whom you have been now the betrayers and murderers, who have received the law by the disposition of angels and have not kept it. Well, he's pretty bold. It cost him his life.

But his clothes were laid down at the feet of a person called Saul, and Saul never got away from it. And Stephen's death, I think, was essential to the conversion later of Saul. It certainly had something to do with it because Paul was there, Saul was there, and he heard this dying man say, Lord Jesus, don't lay this sin to their charge.

I mean, Paul couldn't understand a thing like that. He was bitter, exceeding angry, it says, against the people of God. And he saw, he had a demonstration of what a real Christian was, boldness, as a deacon.

There may be some deacons here. I love deacons. I've had good deacons in my church, and a few that didn't deac well, but then they never had a perfect pastor either, you know.

So the score is even. And then, following the example of Jesus and the apostles, in John 7 they said of Jesus, as his enemies did, Lo, he speaks boldly. That's one thing they said about Christ.

They knew exactly what he was getting at. Don't make the mistake of trying to be poetic when you preach. Sometimes we memorize poetry to let the people know we're well educated.

We spot off all this poetry which has nothing whatever to do. I remember a church, a friend of mine pastored in Ontario, and it had a preacher who did nothing but write poetry. So when he preached, it was all poetry.

They never had a single man in the church when my friend took over. And so he tried to correct that, and got out among the men, and started talking to men. Then one Sunday morning he had a heart attack in church.

Not quite, but almost. He preached on the text, who is on the Lord's side, let him come unto me. And then he said, after he finished the message, if there's anybody here who would like to be saved, stand up.

And seven men got up. He said, I almost fainted. What will I do? He had them sit down.

So then he went through it again, and he was sure they didn't understand. He made it more difficult. And then it was the same question, the same seven men got up.

He said, then I knew I was in trouble. But they're all heads of families, and the church got changed. Let's not try and act more educated than we are to impress people.

Do you know what a pastor said? He said, every now and then, I use big words that my people don't understand, just to let them know I'm ahead of them. Listen, do you know what made that exceptionally bad? There were words he didn't know either. He just picked them out of the dictionary.

And I hope I'm not giving anybody ideas. Alright, Christ was bold. And you know, sometimes you can use the word plain, because the marginal reading in 2 Corinthians 3 is plain, plainness, boldness, plainness.

So people know what we're saying, and understand it. And of course, the apostles, we've already seen that. But they were very plain, very bold.

I mean, you read the sermons. Look at the sermon on the day of Pentecost. Peter's sermon is 40% quotations of the Bible.

Do you notice that? 40%. And if you go through the sermons in Acts, even, by the way, the sermon at Mars Hill in Acts 17. Again and again, I've heard it said that there isn't one scripture quotation in Paul's sermon at Mars Hill, because he was preaching to a congregation that were not conversant with the Word of God.

But he did quote. He said that God will judge the world in righteousness. That's a quotation from the Psalms, an exact quotation from the Psalms.

And I think I found ten different things that Paul said in his sermon there, that were taken from simple statements in the Old Testament. He simply, he gave them to the people in a different form, but he was giving them the same truth. He said the most high doesn't dwell in Temple's maple hands, and so on.

Well, Isaiah chapter 66. But boldness, in a sweet spirit, as often as possible, even with a smile, representing our Lord Jesus Christ. And then, Paul was in jail, and he said, many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the Word without fear.

What was he talking about? Look in the context. He said, brethren, the things that have happened unto me, have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel, so that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all Caesar's court, and in all other places. So he was in jail, but the power of God was on him in such a measure, that all kinds of people were getting converted.

Here, in Caesar's court, and in the jail, and all around the place, prisoners. And as Christians watched and saw what was happening, they were reasoning, I suppose, this way. This guy's in jail, look how God's using him.

And they got bold themselves in preaching the gospel. Many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, were much more bold to speak the Word without fear. Well, dear people, these are some things, to be right with God and right with man.

And you know, it's easier to be right with God than it is to be right with men. Because God won't tell. And your wife might.

I can't, dear people, I can't overemphasize this point. I may have to go to jail. I don't care.

I may lose my wife when I share some things with her. I don't care. I may lose my job.

I don't care. He said, there's just one thing that has my whole attention, and that is to be right with my God. Well, God took care of everything.

Didn't lose his job, didn't lose his wife, didn't have to go to jail. God took care of everything. But he was prepared.

But I'll tell you something, God really shook him up. He was sitting at his office in the university congratulating himself and God, because certain people were going forward that he knew had problems and needed to go forward. And he was engaged in this for a half an hour, and I'll have to tell you what he told me.

He said, suddenly the Holy Spirit tore my heart wide open and showed me every sin I'd ever committed from the time I was a child until that day. He said it was like looking into hell. He phoned me from his office.

He was crying so badly he was incoherent. But I finally met him and he wanted to see me, and I said, come. And fifteen minutes later he ran into my office and fell on his knees with his head on my desk, and the tears ran in all directions.

And I thought, his wife has died, something terrible has happened to the family. I knelt beside him with my arm around him and tried to comfort him, and finally he told me what had happened. Oh, Pastor, he said, it was like looking into hell.

But he made everything right. And that's what God is after, for our own good, for our own good. When I was eighteen years of age, we went up to Red Lake, Ontario.

Another fellow and I, we hitchhiked up in the wintertime, and we had a couple of toboggans with stuff on it, and we flagged down a tractor train, they had tractor trains going from Silicon Ontario up to Red Lake, and we managed to get a ride with these guys. And then they dumped us off about twelve miles from town because they said if the Mounties catch us bringing you in because you're vagrants, we'll be in trouble and

you'll be in trouble. So okay, they just dropped us off in the bush, and it was snowing, a wet, heavy, wet snow.

We didn't have any, they didn't have sleeping bags in those days, we had some blankets. Pretty soon we were soaking wet, this wet snow all night long, the bush was all green and we couldn't find any dry wood at all, you know, and we were just laying there in the snow, and our blankets shivering, and we got sick, both of us that night, when the sun came up in the morning, we were ready to die. And then I saw a fellow coming across the lake, there was a diamond drill camp over here, and there was a cook, and he came over and said, what are you guys doing here? So we told him what happened.

Man, he says, come on over to the camp. He got us dried out, he gave us food, and then he set us up. And we were too ignorant to know he was setting us up.

He said, the camp was closing down in a month or so, which was true. He said, and I've made a deal with the boss to buy the food, and I need someone to take the food from the camp over to Red Lake Town. Would you guys volunteer for this? He said, I've got the toboggans and everything, and so we made a deal with him.

He was stealing the food. We didn't, I mean, we were too dumb to realize, we were only 18 years of age, you'd trust almost everybody, at least we used to in those days. He said, come at 12 o'clock at night.

We should have known from that. Anyway, we never got caught. And some years ago, God reminded me of this, uh-oh, yeah, well I found out the company was out of business, I couldn't do anything about that, there was no way I could track it down, so I tried to figure out how much the food would have been worth, and gave it to missions.

Then I had a clear conscience. But somebody might say, well, that happened before you were a Christian. Well, that's true, but in Luke chapter 19, Zacchaeus made things right that were made wrong before he became a Christian.

So we're following, you know, good biblical precedent in this. I don't know why, but I just feel strongly, dear people, to emphasize this point. They're all important, all of these things are important, to be filled with the Spirit, to be filled with the Word of God, these things are all important.

But this is very important. It's really the starting place, because the other things don't work until this is dealt with. I'll never forget a pastor one time, I had a crusade in Cameo, Idaho, and he lived the and they'd arranged for me to speak in his church Sunday morning, which I did.

And he was with other people that came forward that morning, and he met God in a new way. Thursday of that week he phoned me and he said, Bill, can you tell me what's happened to me? I said, I don't know, what's going on? He said, before I committed my life completely to God, he said, you know, five minutes a day was really about all I ever spent with the Bible. I read a lot of books, but not the Bible.

Now, he said, five hours isn't enough. He said, I'm just eating it up. He said, how come? Well, I said, it's Proverbs 1.23, turn my reproof, I'll pour out my spirit unto you, I'll make known my words unto you, and the Word of God comes alive.

You can't copy Watchman Nee and study 18 chapters of the Bible every day if your heart's not right. When it says, desire the sincere milk of the Word, do you know what it says in the context? Wherefore, laying

aside all malice, secret hatred in the heart, and all guile, that's what the fisherman uses to camouflage the hook. Laying aside all malice and all guile and hypocrisies and envies and all evil speakings as newborn babes desire the sincere milk of the Word that you may grow thereby.

If these things are in my life, I'll never have this kind of a hunger for the Word of God. It's impossible. That's why I think it's the first thing we need to deal with, to be right with God, right with others, to the glory of God.

And God will show us. It says, remember, He shows them their work and their transgressions, that they have exceeded, and He opens their ear to discipline, and He commands that they return from iniquity. So God will work with us in that.

Before I close, in Isaiah 56, Isaiah said, his watchman, and he's talking about watchdogs. He's likening the watchmen of Israel to dogs, to watchdogs. His watchmen are blind.

He says, they're all ignorant, they're all dumb dogs that cannot bark, sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber. Yes, he says, they're greedy dogs, which can never have enough. They all look to their own way, for their own gain, from their quarter.

So here he's talking about watchmen that can't see, they're blind, and Peter talks about professing Christians. He says, he that lacks these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and as for a dogman, he is purged from his old sins. His watchmen are blind, they're all ignorant, they're not even trained.

Can you imagine having a watchdog? He's never been trained for the job. He can't see, he's blind. He's bumping into trees all the time, bumping into the other dogs, you know.

He likes to sleep and eat, and that's his whole story, that's his whole life. He's ignorant, he's greedy, and he loves to sleep. And there are people, there's lots of Christians like that, and maybe some of us.

I don't know why God put this on my heart to share tonight. I'm sure there's somebody here that God wants to speak to about it. Dumb dogs, they can't bark.

So the crook walks right into the house, takes what he wants, kills whom he wants, and walks away and the dog is still sleeping out on the porch. And we are supposed to be, as God said to Ezekiel in chapter 3, chapter 33 of his book, Son of man, I have made you a watchman to Israel, and we're watchmen as well, dear people. It says others saved with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment spotted by the flesh, in the book of Jude.

And that was not written to preachers or Christian workers, it was written to all of us. Others saved with fear, snatching them, literally snatching them out of the fire, hating even the garment that's spotted by the flesh. Why is it we can talk about our kids and about politics and the economic situation and the elections and all these other things, the weather, but when it comes to talking about the Lord and the gospel, we're dumb dogs.

Our voice box somehow doesn't work anymore. I was in Alaska, staying with a fellow, and next door they had a bunch of these malamute dogs, you know, they had them on cages about this high above the ground, and they had four or five of these beautiful big white looking dogs all in a row. I stayed there a week, I never heard the dogs bark once.

So I said to this guy, what's with those dogs next door? I never heard them bark. He said, that's mine, that's because of me. I said, what did you do? He said, those dogs barked all the time, and I got so upset, I finally went and said to this guy, listen man, there's a noise ordinance in this city, and if you don't do something with those dogs, I'm going to report you.

We can't even sleep at night. So the guy took all his dogs and had them debarked. I was the holder of the crusade in Minneapolis some years ago with a bunch of churches, and the chairman of the crusade had a heart attack and died before I got there.

So another man phoned and said to me, and he was pastor of a historic evangelical church in Minneapolis, and he said, I've been asked to take the place of this gentleman that died, and he said, I just want to tell you frankly, Bill, I'm not revived myself. I'm not walking in the Spirit myself. I know that.

So you better know this too, and you better pray for me. So he did. And he did his best, and then we had a preacher's meeting on a Saturday morning, and God really met him.

And his testimony was so great, he said, you know people, he said, I couldn't even say the word Jesus on the telephone. It just stuck in my throat. I could never get it out.

He said, now? He said, you know what happened the other day? I was in a drugstore, and the gal gave me ten cents too much change, and I didn't count it until I got home, and I realized she gave me too much change. So I went back and said, hey, you gave me ten cents too much change. Oh, forget it.

She said, that's nothing. He said, no honey, I want to talk to you about Jesus. He couldn't have done that before, because his heart wasn't right.

Dumb dogs. Oh, dear people. How does God look at us? Are we dumb dogs that can't bark about the essential things? Ignorant, sleeping, eating, selfish, selfish.

They all look to their own way for their gain from their quarrel. Great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus. People, when I talk to you like this, I've failed in this area too.

When I first started off, I'll never forget. I was working in a pulpwood camp, and lying in my bunk one night, God called me to preach. It was the worst night I ever put in.

I looked around and thought he must be speaking to someone else, because the reason why I worked in bush camps was because the trees didn't have eyes, and they didn't talk. I was so self-conscious, I could hardly look at myself in the mirror without being totally embarrassed. Many times when somebody would ask me a question, I couldn't say a word.

My tongue got all twisted up in my mouth, I couldn't get a word out. When God called me to preach, I cried, I begged, I did everything I could do. I didn't threaten, but I did everything else.

Oh, God, I can't, I can't, I can't. But just a day or two before I'd read this verse in the Bible, I can do all things through Christ, and God just nailed me to the wall. I said, OK, God, I'll try, I'll try.

And people will never forget the first time I preached, publicly, thirty pairs of eyes all looking at me. So I picked a long chapter of the Bible, 1 Corinthians chapter 12, and I thought if I'm persecuted in one verse, I can flee to another. Keep this thing going.

You know, I managed about fifteen minutes. You know, when I went home that night, I was just flying. I said, hey, God, we did it, we did it.

Then there was a second time. It was almost as bad as the first time, but I was able to go home. We did it again, you know, we did it again.

And people, for a couple of years after that even, very often, people asked me a question, I couldn't say a word. My tongue got all tied up inside my head. And God did something for me, and God can do something for any of us.

But dear people, we don't want to come to the end of life's journey with empty hands. You know, God can use any of us. Dear people, if we'll give ourselves totally to Him.

She has done what she could, Jesus said of a certain woman. He doesn't ask us to do what we can't do, just what we can do. The will of God is acceptable, it's something you can do.

Romans 12.

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