

Shuffling Saints

by Bill McLeod

The sermon emphasizes the importance of being born again and filled with the Spirit of God in order to experience true liberty and freedom in the Christian life.

Duration: 55:56

Scripture: Acts 19:18, Hebrews 5:11

Topics: "Lukewarmness"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of being free and loose in our lives. He uses the analogy of a calf being let loose from a stall and running and kicking its heels. The speaker also mentions the need for Christians to have a solid foundation, comparing it to deer jumping with joy on solid ground. He warns against causing others to stumble or be offended by our actions and reminds us that we are constantly being watched by various entities, including angels and demons. The speaker concludes by highlighting the need for self-reflection and willingness to listen to God's guidance in order to overcome obstacles and experience true freedom.

Transcript

John chapter 11, well the chapter begins by saying that a certain man was sick and his name was Lazarus and he died. And there's about 50 verses in the chapter to tell the story of what happened when Jesus came and raised him from the dead. Lazarus come forth and he that was dead came forth bound hand and foot with grave clothes and his face was bound about with a napkin.

And then Jesus said loose him and let him go. You know there's a vast difference between life and liberty. You might have life but be in jail.

So you've got life but not much liberty. In the story of Lazarus we have a beautiful picture of a Christian, a genuine Christian. He is born again, he's been raised to spiritual life by the power of the Son of God, but he doesn't have much liberty.

And we're going to think about that for a few moments today. Life and liberty. Loose him and let him go.

18 times in the book of Exodus God said to Pharaoh, let my people go. Let them go. You've had them in bondage, let them go.

And God kept crying from heaven, let my people go. And Pharaoh didn't want to let them go. Satan doesn't want to let you and I go.

What is the Christian life supposed to be like? To a lot of people it's just a big drag and a bag of rules. I mean even some born again believers when they get very honest they'll tell you that. They're not enjoying it, they are enduring it.

I was raised in a Presbyterian church originally and my brother Bob and I, there were four boys in our family, but we learned the shorter catechism which was a series of questions and answers that went like this. The first question, what is the chief end of man? We thought of that word end last night. What is the chief end of man? What is the chief reason that God put us here on the earth? And the response was man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever.

And my brother told me he was in his early 20s before he discovered that he'd learned the response wrong. He'd learned it this way, man's chief end is to glorify God and to endure him forever. And that's the way a lot of Christians live.

They're not enjoying, they are enduring. How does the Bible speak about the Christian life? Things like this, he that has clean hands shall be stronger and stronger. Are you stronger now than you were 12 months ago? The path of the just is as the shining light that shines more and more unto the perfect day.

Do you have more light on life's pathway than you had a year or five or ten years ago? Well you should have, if you don't have it isn't God's fault. He's promised this in the Bible but many of us cannot honestly say I do have more light, I am getting more light. As a matter of fact people tell me well I'm drifting backwards, I'm not as sharp and keen as I was five years ago.

And that's a denial of course of what the Bible is saying. They go from strength to strength in Psalm 84. So are you stronger now than you were a year ago? Well the Bible says you should be and there's something wrong if I'm not.

But grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. Am I growing in grace, am I growing in knowledge? John chapter 1 tells us of his, it means out of his, that is Christ, out of his fullness we have all received and grace for grace. Grace for grace.

You know yesterday's grace will not do for today. Every day we have to have new grace and new strength from God and we can have that if we're walking in the light as the Bible says we should. If the Son therefore shall make you free, you shall be free indeed.

And we sang the chorus, Jesus sets me absolutely free, he died on Calvary, he gives me victory. Can you say that Jesus Christ has set you absolutely free? We were singing that chorus in a meeting one time and a lady got up and very hastily left the auditorium and I thought perhaps she wasn't feeling well. We discovered later on because she gave her testimony publicly that while we were singing the chorus it suddenly dawned on her that this was not a reflection of her life.

She was not free, she was all bound up and so she ran downstairs to get alone in a room where she could pray and get things straightened out with God and so she did and was able to commit her life completely to God in a way that she had never been able to do before and Jesus set her absolutely free. So there's a difference between life being born again and liberty being filled with the Spirit of God and the Bible makes that distinction quite clear. You know to people who have been Christians for some time at the place called

Ephesus, Paul wrote and said, now be filled with the Spirit.

They have the Spirit, he said so in chapter 1, he talked about it in chapter 2, he talked about it in chapters 3 and 4, but in chapter 5 he says, now be filled with the Spirit. You have the Spirit, be filled with the Spirit. You have life but you need liberty and only the Spirit of God can give you the kind of liberty that God wants his people to have.

Is it right to spiritualize a story like the story of Lazarus in chapter 11 in John's gospel? I think it is, because sometimes this is done in the Bible. Remember in John chapter 5, the Lord Jesus Christ said, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live. The hour is coming, I think the reference there is to the judgment day or the day when Christ will return and the resurrection takes place and the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and they that hear will live.

But he says, now is. Now he is talking about something spiritual. The hour is coming and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God.

Now he is talking about those that are dead in trespasses and sins as all of us were until Jesus Christ became our personal Savior. And you know this helps us to understand what really happened when I was born again. It was not something I did of my own self, it was something God did for me.

He called me personally, and I was born again by the power of the Spirit of God. It took the voice of Jesus Christ to raise Lazarus from the dead, and it takes the voice of the Son of God to raise you and I from that state in which we were actually born. We've inherited from Adam, our father, a sinful nature, and we can't shake it off, we can't get loose from it, and we were dead, actually literally dead, in trespasses and sins.

So we did not enjoy the company of Christians, we did not enjoy Bible study, we did not enjoy prayer, we did not enjoy gospel songs, we were dead in trespasses and sins. And then in the language of the book of Jeremiah in the Old Testament, the Lord passed by and he saw us in our condition, lying out there abandoned in a field and covered with blood. And I said unto you, live.

I said live, and you lived. And that's what happened to you and I, if you're a Christian today. Jesus Christ cried live, and we lived by the power of God.

We were dead in sins, but we had a spiritual resurrection by the power of the voice of the Son of God. Lazarus, come forth. He called your name too, and you came forth from that tomb where you were lying, helpless and hopeless.

You could not save yourself. Only Christ can do that. I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save.

So we read in the book of Isaiah, and then the angel said, Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins. Why, even his enemies bore witness to that, because they said he saved others, or they admitted that he claimed to save others, and they were mocking him now because he could not save himself. Not understanding that it was not a case of could not, it was a case of would not.

He could have, but he chose not to, because he was a lamb slain from the foundation of the world. And he knew why he'd come. He'd come to dine a cross for the sins of man.

Now by the power of the Holy Spirit, he speaks to our heart. And we want to be absolutely sure, first of all, that we are born again, that we do have life, that we're not still dead in trespasses and sins. A team with which I'm well acquainted had meetings in a large Christian college, a preacher's training college in the United States, and there were several hundred students in that evangelical institution that discovered they had never been born again.

The same team was in one of the largest Bible churches in the world, and under one sermon, by the blessing of the Spirit of God, five hundred baptized church members came forward for salvation. They discovered they had never been born again. There was a great revival in Shantung, China, back about 1932, and the cry of the revival everywhere was this, have you been born again? Are you born again? Because thousands of church people discovered they had never been born again.

They knew the evangelical talk and language, but they'd never been raised to life from spiritual death by the power of the Spirit of God. He that believes on the Son of God has the witness in himself. Do you have the witness in your heart that you're God's child? God's Spirit bears witness with our spirit, with my spirit, that I am the child of God, the Son of God.

Occasionally people have come to me and they will tell me what happened when they were five, four years old, or at a Bible camp or something, and then they will say to me, as they occasionally have, do you think I'm sane? They want me to tell them they're sane. Now I can't tell them that. That's the work of the Spirit of God.

But if I'm really born again, the Spirit of God will then bear witness with my spirit. Remember, he that believes on the Son of God has the witness in himself. You will have the inner, quiet witness of the Holy Spirit that you're God's child.

And if that's lacking, you should seek God until it's there. "...Seek ye the Lord while he may be found. Call ye upon him while he is near.

Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts. And let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him. And to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." God is just waiting.

If you're not saved, you're not sure about it, you know all the evangelical talk. During the meetings in Saskatoon back in 1971, a teacher from one of Canada's best-known Canadian Bible schools came to me and said, Bill, do you mind being late on the platform tonight? And I said, no, why, what's on your mind? He said, I would like to get saved. And I stared at him, I thought he was joking, and he wasn't.

He says, no, he said, I've known the evangelical talk. I was raised from the time I was a child in a Christian home. I knew all this talk backwards, and I know all the answers.

I know how to show someone else how to be saved. But he said, I've never had the witness of God's Spirit that I'm God's child. And so we knelt together in my office, and he met the Lord.

He met the Lord. I remember a man, he lives now in Edmondon, walking with God. He'd be my assistant pastor for some while in Saskatoon.

And then he left Saskatoon and went out further west. That was probably eight years before the revival in 71. And then he heard about the revival, and his life seemed to be so empty and dry.

And so he came to meetings I had in Edmondon, and came to meetings I had other places, and he would keep coming forward, and he never got anywhere. He thought he was a Christian, and one night God showed him he'd never been born again. Oh, he was a rousing song leader.

He was gospel magic with children. He'd been an assistant pastor. He'd been a pastor.

He'd worked in God's invasion army for several terms, two terms at least, and maybe longer. He'd led other people to Christ, and God showed him he'd never been born again. And so he journeyed all the way from Edmondon to Saskatoon, and we got a few people together, and we knelt with him, and we prayed with him, and God touched his life.

And all of a sudden he began weeping, and when he was composed enough to talk, he said, for the first time in my life, Jesus is real. Jesus is real. For the first time in my life.

Make sure you're born again. All right. Lazarus had life.

Jesus said, Lazarus, come forth! And Billy Sunday's comment on that was this. It's a good thing he said Lazarus, or the resurrection would have occurred prematurely. It probably, it might have.

Lazarus, come forth. I don't know if they have reruns in heaven, but if they have them, this is one thing I want to see rerun. I want to see what happened when he came shuffling out of the grave.

I want to see the look on the face of the people when Lazarus came out, because, you know, they couldn't see his face. They really didn't know if it was Lazarus or not. Oh, Jesus had called his name, and this was the grave where he'd been buried, but his face was bound with a napkin, and he was bound.

He was just shuffling along like this, you know, he could hardly even walk. He couldn't see anything, because his face was bound. And I can just see the people all staring at him.

Who is it? Is it Lazarus? And they could hardly believe it. His sisters were there, his friends were there. And then Jesus cried, Loose him, and let him go.

What I'm saying is this, that Lazarus shuffling out of the grave is a picture of the new Christian, born again. He's got life, but he sure doesn't have much liberty. Do you remember the story of the woman in the Gospel of Luke? She was bowed together for 18 years.

The Scripture says she was a real believer. She was a daughter of Abraham, but Satan had bound her for 18 years. And Jesus touched her, laid hands on her, and she was made perfectly straight.

What a blessing! Almost like a picture of Lazarus in a different way, but the same idea. Loose him, loose her, and let her go. David said, I will walk at liberty, for I seek thy precepts.

Do you walk at liberty by the power of the Spirit of God? Has Jesus set you absolutely free from the old habits, the old ways, the old life? Or are you still struggling with the grave clothes of that old life? And you don't have the liberty that God has promised. Let's look at some things concerning Lazarus. First of all, his hands were not free.

They were tied by his side, because he was bound hand and foot with grave clothes from top to bottom, and he couldn't move his hands. The Bible says, Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Do you have clean hands and a pure heart? Having therefore these promises, dearly

beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

So then I am to cleanse myself. O Jerusalem, God-pride, wash your heart from wickedness, that you may be saved. How long shall your vain thoughts lodge within you? There's something I can do.

There's something you can do. Cleanse your hands, God-pride, and purify your hearts. So what I really need to do is this, because Jeremiah tells us in chapter 17 of his book that the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.

Who can know it? They brought a lady to me one time after one of the meetings. They'd been counseling with her. She was a pastor's wife.

And I said, What's the problem? She says, I don't know. They've all prayed with me. They've talked to me and so on, but it hasn't helped me at all.

And I said, What is your problem? She said, Well, I wish I knew. And I said, Have you ever asked God to search your heart? Oh, yes, she said. I said, What did God tell you? She said, Nothing.

And I looked at her and gave her my biggest smile, because I had to say something rather sharp. And I said, Now either one of two things is true, either you're lying or God's lying. Which one is it? She said, I'm not.

Then God is? No, no, God is lying. Then who's lying? Well, she got quite stubborn, and she said, Look, I have asked God to search my heart, and God hasn't told me anything. I said, I can't believe that.

I said, I think God was showing you things, but you turned your ears off. You didn't want to listen, because you were afraid of what God might say. The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.

Who can know it? I, the Lord, search the heart. I try to raise. God is the only one.

God searches the heart. This is mentioned many places in the Bible. The Spirit of man is the candle of the Lord, searching all the inward parts.

God by His Spirit. Remember, then He shows them their work and their transgressions that they have exceeded. God's just waiting to show us what the problems are, why I'm not free, why I don't have liberty, why I don't have power, why the Holy Spirit's not filling my life.

God is waiting to show me these things, if I'm only willing to listen. I didn't know what to do finally, so I said to this pastor, I said, Well, let's kneel at the pew here, so we knelt at the pew. And all of a sudden God gave me something.

I hadn't planned on asking her this. I mean, just sort of, just like God spoke up, threw me to her. Very simple question.

I said to her, How do you like the work your husband's engaged in? And she started to cry. And she got louder and louder, until finally it was embarrassing. I mean, people started looking from other parts of church.

She was just weeping her heart out before God. Then she must have confessed at least ten different things that were bottled up in her heart. Going all the way back to the days when she and her husband went to the same Bible school and he found the studies so easy and she found them so hard and she resented that.

Now they were married, they had several children. She had to stay at home and look after the children. She thought, breathing around the country with the young people and so on, she resented that.

She didn't like the area they were in, didn't like the church, didn't like the people, didn't like this, didn't like that. Ten different things that were wrong in her life. They'd been there all this time and God had been talking to her about them, but she wasn't paying any attention to what God was saying.

Be still and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the heathen. I will be exalted in the earth.

And some of us are too noisy and we're too much engaged in this and that. We don't have any time to be quiet enough for God to speak. Be silent, all flesh, before the Lord, for He has raised up out of His holy habitation.

The Lord is in His holy temple and all the earth keeps silence before Him. God wants to speak. The mighty God, even the Lord, has spoken and called the earth from the rising of the sun, even unto the going down of the sea.

God is calling. God is speaking all the time, every day, every moment. God is talking and we're not listening.

We're too busy. Sometimes we're afraid to listen because of what God might say to our own hearts. We want God to speak to our husband because we're not getting along too well with him or to our children because they're not walking with God.

But it all begins when I say, God, speak to me. God, show me my sin. That's when God begins to work in a person's life and heart.

All right. His hands were not free because they were not clean. He that has clean hands shall be stronger and stronger.

Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. And somebody might be saying, well, it's addressed to sinners. We're Christians.

Ah, we're sinners also. Paul didn't say, Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I was chief. He said, of whom I am chief.

We are saved sinners. Others are lost sinners. But make no mistake about it, we're all sinners.

Cleanse your hands, God cries. You sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Be afflicted and mourn and weep.

Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord and he shall lift you up. Many of us are so proud.

God can't get through to us. God can't change our life. We think everything's just fine.

We're blaming other people and other things, our job or something else for the problems we have in our Christian life. And we're just not honest enough because we're not humble enough to get down low enough for God to speak to us enough to change our life. I, the Lord, search the heart.

Oh yes he does. Let us search and try our ways and turn again unto the Lord. Let us lift up our heart with our hands unto God in the heavens.

That's in Lamentations chapter 3. He does not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men, but he does afflict, not willingly, but he does afflict and he does grieve us and he does convict us and he does make us feel uncomfortable until we get to the place where we're willing to humble ourselves under his mighty hand. Remember that verse from last night, draw near to God and he will draw near to you? Of course he will. And he's just waiting for us to do something like this.

Hands all tied up, feet all tied up. All a man could do was just shuffle along. And you know if you were walking behind Lazarus, he had no way of knowing where he was going.

I'm sure he wasn't going, he was going like this, you know, crooked paths, because he couldn't see. They have made them crooked paths. Whosoever goes therein shall not know peace.

The Bible says in Hebrews 12, make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way, but let it rather be healed. Would you want a sinner to see your life every hour of the day and night? Would you want him to follow you, the path you're walking in? Oh, the Bible says make straight paths for your feet because the lame, the sinner, he's following, he's watching. You're God's light and he's watching you.

And if you don't walk right, you're liable to push him right off the road. And that sometimes happens. I remember with what tears a woman one time told me how Satan had used her.

She was a social drinker and she went to a party that the community threw for a new couple that had moved into the area and this party kind of a welcoming party, especially for them. And they had liquor there and this Christian woman, she drank socially. She didn't know that that young couple who were not Christians before they went to that particular gathering that night, they said they knew there was going to be liquor there.

They had never touched liquor in their life, although they were not Christians and they knew this lady was a Christian. And so here's what they decided. We will watch Mrs. So-and-so and if she drinks, then it must be all right because she's a Christian.

She believes in the Bible and in God. And so they watched her and she drank that night. So they drank that night.

They became alcoholics. And 20 years later, she called them one day to try and win him to Christ. And they literally ordered her out of the house.

They said, it's through you we got into this mess. Don't you talk to us about Jesus Christ. We don't even want to listen.

You got us into this mess. The Bible says, make straight paths for your feet. It's good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor anything whereby your brother stumbles or is offended or is made weak.

You are being watched. You remember Paul says we are made a theater. We are made a spectacle.

The Greek word there is theatron, from which we get the English word theater. We are made a theater to the world, to angels and to men. Demons are watching.

God's angels are watching. Satan is watching. Redeemed people on the other side are watching.

People on this side are watching. We're on stage, Christian. And it does matter how we live.

Make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way. Somebody may get discouraged following you, get the wrong concept of God and turn totally away. It's happening all the time.

Satan, if he can get a Christian that's cold and backslidden and carnal and cranky and all this kind of thing, he'd rather have one like that than have a thousand drunkards in the world, because he can use that Christian to discourage others from seeking Jesus Christ. It matters so much how we live that we be honest in all our business dealings and filled with the love of God. And again, last night we talked about being filled with God's love, love rising out of a pure heart.

Oh, dear people, seek that above everything else in life, to be a Christian that's consumed. My heart, the altar, God's love, the flame, as we sing in one of our songs, to be filled with the love of God. I don't know of anything that moves me more than that.

And I know this as a Christian believer, the older I get, the more I want to be simply filled with the love of God. The more I want to know the love of God in my own life. And I know that means there's going to be many times when my love is going to be challenged, and perhaps challenged very, very deeply.

I remember one time a lady threw a dipper of cold water in my face without any warning. I mean, just like that. It wasn't even her house, there was a bunch of us in this home.

So I said to her, I gave her my biggest smile and I said, Now you've provided the water, do you think you could find me a towel? And she went off and got a towel and threw it at me like this, and I said, Thank you very much. And she said, I suppose you're wondering why I did that. And I said, As a matter of fact, I am, because it never happened before.

And she said, I wanted to hear what you'd say if I could catch you off your guard. See, she was not a Christian, and she knew I'd been a lumberjack. And she thought this Christianity thing is just some kind of a veneer the guy's wearing, you know, and so she wanted to catch me off my guard.

I'm so thankful to God that she didn't catch me off my guard. You know, if you start the day right, the day will go right. Start it early in the morning, have a time with God.

There's a little tract in the packet you got, starting the day with God. Well, that's my own personal program, and I don't advertise the tract because I wrote it, because it was just something God gave to me one day. But I find it true for myself that if I get the day started right, then the day will always go right.

You don't get caught off your guard. Satan can't use you to discourage other people. His hands, his arms, his feet.

Then, you know, it cost him a lot of energy to move. Could you imagine Lazarus in the condition he was in at that moment running a hundred-yard dash? I mean, he's just shuffling along. He couldn't make a

hundred yards in fifty seconds.

For one thing, he couldn't go in a straight line. Unless he had someone up at the far end blowing a whistle or something, then he might know where to go. But he'd be constantly tripping and falling and all this kind of thing.

No, he couldn't do it. He just couldn't do it. Neither can you.

Neither can I. That's why God wants us to be loose. Let my people go. Loose him and let him go.

Let him go. I think of a verse over in Malachi chapter 4. It talks about the coming day of God. Unto you that fear my name shall the Son of Righteousness arise with healing in his wings, and you shall go forth and grow up as calves of the stall.

Other translations say you shall grow up and gamble, G-A-M-B-O-L, which means, you know, when you let a calf loose from the stall, he runs up and he kicks his heel. You've all seen that happen. At least I've seen it happen.

And they're so glad to be out of the stall, they just go crazy for a little while. And that's what Malachi meant. That's what the Holy Spirit meant.

You shall go forth and gamble as a calf let loose from the stall, kicking up your heels. You remember that verse? It's in Habakkuk. It says that God will make our feet like the feet of a deer, like hinds' feet.

I read that. I knew it meant the feet of a deer. And I used to wonder about that until one time when I was with the Shanhemah's mission.

I was walking from one camp to another. I had about 12 miles to walk that day with a pack on my back with Bibles and stuff in it and so on. And I was on a hard-packed snow road.

But that winter the snow in the bush was about this deep. It was terrible. And the deer were dying like flies because, you know, except where they were yarded up and then they might run out of food and they had to try and make another yard.

And I was walking down this road. I had about eight miles to get into this camp and I saw three or four deer coming through this deep snow. We used to call it swimming.

I mean, they were literally swimming. Just their heads sticking out. And the first guy would go a few feet and then he'd be all tuckered up and he'd kind of lean over and the next guy would pass him.

Then he'd beat the trail a little bit and he'd lean over and the next guy would go past him. It was really neat to watch. I wished I'd had a movie camera, but I didn't.

So I just stopped and watched them because they didn't know I was there. And finally they hit that hard-packed snow road and I wish you could have seen them. They started jumping.

You know they call them jumping deer? They call them jumpers? And they started jumping. I might be exaggerating, but I said I almost went 15 feet in the air. One after the other.

Jumping like this, as high as they could go because there's something solid under their feet. What a beautiful picture of the Christian. He'll make our feet like the feet of a deer because he'll put something

solid, a new foundation, a rock.

And he's put a new song in my mouth. He's been praised unto our God. Many shall see it in fear and shall trust in the Lord.

But poor Lazarus, it cost him a tremendous amount of energy to move. And you know, I read this many years ago. The writer was saying that machinery that's well oiled will last for years.

But if you don't oil it, it'll burn out in hours. And you know, in the Christian life, there's a verse in Proverbs that says, if you don't cut the edge of the tool, if you don't make the tool sharp, then you have to use more physical strength to cut the tree down. It doesn't say to cut the tree down, but to use the tool.

Whatever the tool is, you have to sharpen the edge. Well, we all understand that. And some of us know we're beating at the trees with a club.

We're not using an axe, but the edge is not sharp. We're not filled with the Holy Spirit. Consequently, it takes a lot more energy to get one-one-hundredth as much work done for the glory of God.

So was Lazarus. And then it must have been extremely uncomfortable because all tied hand and foot, he must have been sweating like crazy underneath all those clothes. What a picture of a Christian all tied up.

He can't walk at liberty. He's still bound hand and foot with the old green clothes. He's struggling with old sins.

He reads in the Bible, it says, Sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under the law, but under grace. You say, Boy, that might be true in the Bible, but it sure isn't true in my life. And some of you are saying amen to that in your own heart.

There are certain habits and so on you don't have any victory over. They're there, and some of them are there just as powerfully as they were before you became a Christian. It doesn't mean you're not a Christian, but it does mean this, that you don't have victory over a sin.

He breaks the power of canceled sin. He sets the prisoner free. God wants to do that for you and I, and more than that, God can do it if we'll meet him on his terms.

Stop bargaining with God. Do you remember how Jacob bargained with God? He said, Lord, if you'll bring me home to my father's house in peace, and you'll do this and you'll do this and you'll do this and you'll do this, then I will give you a tithe of all that I possess. Pray tell me, what do you suppose God would want with a bunch of flea-bitten sheep and camels? Say you got a million dollars, and there was a fellow down in Texas and he sold a ten million dollars worth of oil shares, and so he gave the Baptist Church, of which he was a member, a million dollar tithe check, and it was in every paper in America.

He might just as well have taken that million dollar check and burned it up for all the good it did, because the Lord Jesus Christ said you're not supposed to let your left hand know what your right hand is doing. Now, Billy Sunday's comment in that was that a left hand would be mortified and embarrassed to know how little the right hand was doing. I don't think that's what God had in mind.

But anyway, we're not supposed to brag about our giving. You don't in some churches, and I'm sad to say, it never used to be this way, but today in some evangelical churches they are publishing donors lists in the foyer of the church. And I mean if you give a thousand dollars to the building fund brother, you get some

special recognition for doing this.

It's a total denial of what the Lord Jesus Christ taught us. We're not supposed to give the idea of getting recognized for what we did. So he burned up a million dollar tithe check.

Do you know why? Because heaven is such a wonderful place, they wouldn't even light fires with million dollar bills. They're not good enough people. They wouldn't pay for a woodshed in heaven with million dollar bills.

They're not good enough. That which passes muster down here doesn't over there. It's a totally different situation.

That which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God. And there are things, remember Christ said, take heed and beware of covetousness, for man's life does not consist in the abundance of the things which he possesses. I don't know why it is, but often I get into a Christian who's got an extremely well put together house, which cost him maybe \$100,000, \$150,000, \$200,000.

And I don't know why it is, because I never say anything. I stay in those homes sometimes. I never say anything.

But the funny thing is, the minute I get foot inside the door, they have to tell me why they spent all this money on this house. I'm not asking them why they spent all this money on this house, but their conscience is bound to have to tell me, well Bill, my wife and I decided to build this big house so we would have a place for missionaries to stay when they come home on furlough. Well maybe that was true, or maybe they built it because they wanted to have a place big enough for a ping pong deal in the basement.

I don't know. It's not my business, but a man's life does not consist in the abundance of the things which he possesses. And don't ever forget, people we're going to get some terrible shocks.

If there are shocks in heaven, a lot of us are going to experience it. I mean, if God has people lined up according to their faithfulness to him, I think there will be millions and millions of people from heathen cultures who will be getting their rewards before we ever see them, because of the way they live, because of their prayer life. Billy Graham was in Korea one time, and he tells what happened.

He was invited to a five o'clock prayer meeting in the morning, and he thought to himself, it was cold winter weather, there was some snow on the ground, who's going to show up for a prayer meeting at five o'clock in the morning? When he got to the church, he discovered the church was not completed, so it had no roof on, and there was no floor in the church, just a dirt floor, but the floor was covered with snow. Well, who would know? But when he got there at five o'clock in the morning, the place was packed to the doors, and most people had brought a little stick of wood to sit on so they wouldn't have to sit in the snow. And I saw this picture of Billy Graham, this trench coat with a collar turned up standing over by the wall, looking over this crowd.

He couldn't believe it. And some of those women had walked ten miles, carrying a baby in their arms, to be at the five o'clock prayer meeting in the morning, and a lot of us don't attend prayer meetings, we just don't have the time. I mean, we've got a nice warm car, but we've got other things to do on prayer meeting night.

And people, I feel very strongly that that kind of Christianity that has to be begged to attend its own prayer meeting is not New Testament Christianity at all. There are a few churches, not many, I have to say that sadly, not many, there are a few churches that have as big an attendance at the prayer meeting as they have Sunday morning. I know one in Saskatchewan, I know one in England, I know one in the States.

That's just three. And yet, what did Christ say? My house shall be called a house of prayer? He didn't call it a house of preaching, or a house of singing, or a house of good works. He called it a house of prayer.

Because where that is lacking, where prayer is lacking, these other things don't mean anything. Prayer doesn't, or preaching doesn't mean anything, singing doesn't accomplish anything, and good works don't have any effect, because they're not bathed and baptized in prayer, which brings the Spirit of God into the picture. Paul said, I know that this shall turn to my salvation, and he wasn't talking about being personally saved as if he were not saved or something.

He simply said, I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. The Spirit is supplied when God's people pray. And if I have to be begged to attend my own prayer meeting, there's something drastically wrong in my heart.

There was a great revival in the Hebrides in 1952, and Duncan Campbell, a man God so gratefully used there, we were talking about this, and I said, what about the after effects, where there are many people that backslid? He said we don't know five backsliders. I said, what is a backslider? And here's what he said. You can take it for what it's worth to your own heart.

He said, a backslider is a professing Christian that does not regularly attend a prayer meeting. He said, if a born-again believer will not regularly support the prayer meeting, he's already backslidden, he's already cold. And when he told me that in Saskatoon in 1969, he said, my brother, and you probably are not aware of this, but our churches in North America, they're just loaded with backsliders.

And he said to me, my dear brother, are these people born again? I said, yes, they say they are. They say they are. My house should be called a house of prayer.

I'm paying sometimes to be in churches not long ago, in a church where they were sort of phasing the prayer meeting out. They told me they were doing that, because very few were attending a prayer meeting, so they were phasing it out and trying to do it another way. That made me feel very sad.

Here's Lazarus then. He couldn't move without danger to himself. There might be a 20-foot cliff.

He could fall over that thing because he couldn't see where he was going. And a Christian, a born-again believer who has life but not liberty, who's all bound hand and foot with these gray clothes and a napkin, he's in danger of hurting himself, and sometimes he dies. Another problem is this.

If you have a lot of people like this in the same church, they're going to be constantly bumping into each other. Ever see that happen? Oh, there's lots of sparks flying in some churches, you know. And Christians don't get along too well.

Sometimes they mumble and they grumble and they fight because they're bumping into each other. They can't see where they're walking. Then he couldn't talk clearly.

Paul said, seeing that we have such hope, and he was talking about the ministry of the Holy Spirit, we use great plainness of speech. But the person with a napkin over his mouth, he's going to have to talk in muffled tones, and you aren't going to be able to understand him very well when he tries to talk about Jesus Christ, and it's going to come out darkly. Ever try to share Christ and you kind of, you know, you bit on your tongue, or the words came out so funny and you felt so embarrassed and you turned red and you walked away and said, well, I'll never try that again? That's what a lot of Christians do.

Like a pastor in Minneapolis told us, he said, every time I tried to say the word Jesus in front of an unconverted person, the word Jesus stuck in my throat and I couldn't get it out. But God set him free, set that pastor free, and God can set you and I free so we'll find that we can talk about Jesus in any place, and we can talk about him freely, and we can talk about him with power, and people will listen and respect oftentimes what is said. Maybe not a lot of people will be converted, but some will be where the word of the King is there is power.

But that cannot be, dear friend, until I'm set free. Remember, Jesus sets me absolutely free. If the Son therefore shall make you free, you shall be free indeed.

I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. So we call that the overflowing life. Maybe you've heard the statement that the average Christian is just a half-filled vessel, and he is desperately trying to splash over.

Is that your life? Is that the way it's presented in the Bible? Jesus Christ said in John's Gospel, chapter 7, He that believes on me as the Scripture has said, out of his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water. In Proverbs 5 it says, Let your fountains be dispersed abroad, and rivers of water in the street. Is there any blessing attending your life? Has God been able to use you in the lives of other people to win them to himself? Maybe 5, 6, 7 years ago you led a soul to Christ, and you've been basking in the glow and the warmth and the sunshine of that experience, but nothing has happened since.

There is not a single Christian in this building this morning that could not win people to Christ. Every year they live. If my life is right, God can use me, and God will use me.

So Lazarus had life, but no liberty, bumping into others, tripping and falling, falling over cliffs, hurting himself, hurting other people, because he was a Christian, yes, but he never found freedom from the old life, freedom from a fallen sinful nature. Remember what Paul said, O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I had a fellow say to me one time, Yeah, well I'm just like Paul. He said, I'm a wretched man, and so am I. I said, Well, let's read on.

So we turn over to Romans chapter 7, and we read it all. Here's what he said, O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So he never stayed miserable.

He was, but Christ, you see, Christ set him free. So he couldn't talk, and he couldn't see. Peter said, talking about Christians, He that lacks these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and has forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.

It's so sad, you know, in many churches God gives the pastor a vision, something to be done for God locally, or in some other country, some great thing, and then the pastor brings it to the board of the church, and they all say, No, we don't have the money. We can't afford to do that. You know, it happens so often,

because many times our churches are filled with people that are just like Lazarus, shuffling saints we might call them.

They have life but no liberty. They can't see afar off because their faces are covered with a napkin. They can't hear properly either.

Why, it says in Hebrews chapter 5 that you're dull of hearing. He said, the writer said, I have many things to write you concerning Jesus, but you can't bear them now. He said, you're dull of hearing.

When for the time you ought to be teachers, you have need that one teach you again, which be the first principles of the oracles of God, and have become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. Another translation says, not of solid food, and that's the idea. For everyone that uses milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe.

But solid food, strong meat, belongs to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. Therefore, leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on into perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of baptisms, of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. And this we will do if God permit.

So here are people that were dull of hearing. Here are people that couldn't see. Here are people that couldn't talk clearly.

Here are people whose hands were tied. Here are people whose feet are tied. Here are people that couldn't move, that couldn't get anything done, but had a great deal of energy because they were fighting against these clothes that were winding them up.

Jesus Christ doesn't want us to stay this way. Loosen, he said, and let him go. I want you to notice something at this point.

Jesus gave him life, but he asked the disciples to give him liberty. And there is a loosing ministry that God carries on through his people in the lives of other Christians. For example, in the prayer room that happens, and that will happen, where people who know God and love God and are walking in the Spirit, they're not claiming to have something you don't have, and we're not claiming to be superior to any person in this building.

This is not the idea at all. But they're full of faith and full of love and willing to listen and able to help. What does it say in the Bible? Confess your faults one to another.

The Greek there says one to others. And people are horrified. Confess my sins to some... no way.

And then they say, well, does it say false here in the King James? Yes, it does. Oh, but it doesn't mean sins. Oh, yes, it does.

It's a normal New Testament word in the Greek language for sin. Now, I don't know why the translators use the word false, because it's a normal New Testament word for sins. Confess your sins one to others, and then what? Then pray one for another.

Oh, but we're too proud to do that. I wouldn't dare let anybody else know that I'm struggling with sin. Why, then I would go down in your estimation.

And that's the whole problem. So when you interpret it, of course, it's nothing more or less than pride, right? It's just pride. I'm too proud to tell somebody else that I'm struggling with a problem in my heart.

One of you shall chase a thousand. Two of you shall put ten thousand to flight, not two thousand. See how the powers multiply when two people pray.

Bear you one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. But how can I bear your burden if you're too proud to tell me what it is, or if I'm too proud to tell you what my burden is? How can we bear one another's burdens? There is a Lucy ministry in a time of revival where people who are walking in the Spirit, they can help one another. And oh, we see this again and again.

I was a little afterglow one time. It was in Regina back in 1971, or maybe it was the first part of 72. There was about 40 people in this meeting, and Pastor Bowles, who was the senior pastor in the Alliance Church, he was leading the session.

I was just sitting over at the side. And a number of interesting things happened. One of them was this.

A lady went, we had a chair in the middle of the circle, and this girl, she was probably about 20, she went and knelt at the chair, and she went like this, she said, Dear God, I thank you for my beauty, I thank you for my intelligence, and just as fast she started praying. Now, either she hadn't looked in the mirror lately, or else she had one of those mirrors you find in the circuses that distort everything. Anyway, this is how she was praying.

And Pastor Bowles stopped her and he said, Sister, I think you ought to go home and pickle for a while. Oh, did she get mad. I mean, she got to her feet and she stamped.

Oh, that meeting out the door and the door would slam. But she was back the next night, very chastened and humbled, and she asked the crowd to forgive her, and she asked Mr. Bowles to forgive her, and she thanked him for what he said. She said, God used that to show me the pride in my life.

What will God have to use to show you and I the pride in our lives? I got a note one time in a meeting, and the note said, it wasn't signed, the note said, We don't enjoy having all this dirty linen aired in public. And I read the note to the congregation, I said, Thank you, whoever wrote the note, thank you for your concern. I don't believe in parading dirty linen either.

In our meetings we never ever have encouraged people to share sins of a moral nature. We've never encouraged that. And if somebody starts it, we'll stop them.

If somebody gets up and says, I'm going to tell you something that will shock you, we say, Brother, don't say it. We'd rather you never said it. Then I pointed this out to that congregation that day.

In the book of Acts, the Apostle Paul was conducting, you might call them revival meetings, a great thing was happening. And it says, Many that believed came and confessed and showed their deeds. The Greek language is quite strong here.

It says, Many that came openly confessed and thoroughly showed their deeds. And the phrase thoroughly showed, in the Greek language it means from top to toe. From top to toe.

They openly confessed and they thoroughly showed their deeds. They showed them from top to toe. And the people who were involved in witchcraft practices, they brought their books and made a big bonfire and

burned the whole thing in front of everybody else.

That's what happened in the revival at Ephesus. So should it, could it not happen today? I think so. Confess your sins one to another, then pray one for another that you may be healed.

The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. And dear people, Jesus Christ is saying to us, loose him and let him go. Lazarus couldn't do it himself.

He needed outside help. So the Bible says, Exhort one another daily while it's called today, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. May I ask you a question? How long is it since you have exhorted some brother in Christ? I mean, exhorted in the spirit of love.

The Bible says we're to seek that we might excel to the edifying of the church. And so if I'm a born again believer, there's a ministry, perhaps I need the ministry of loosing where other people will pray with me and I'll get honest about myself and my failings. Or perhaps God can use me and will use me in helping other people come into this.

You know, two ladies, one was a Miss Peters, and I forget the name of the other lady. One was French and one was from South Africa, and they met somewhere in Europe and they prayed a lot together. They were two godly women, and finally God told them to go to Korea.

This was back in the early 1930s, and they went to Korea. They did very little, if any, public preaching, but they did a lot of personal talking with missionaries, and in one area they said there were 150 missionaries that experienced a powerful revival in their heart through the counseling of these two women, believe it or not. One man, he had a degree, he was a doctor, a doctor of theology, and of course most of the missionaries in South Korea at that time were Presbyterian missionaries, well educated, evangelical, sound, true to the Bible and all that kind of thing.

And this one fellow told what happened. His wife, we say that nagging is constant reiteration of the truth. You know, honey, take the garbage out, and two days later, honey, why won't you take the garbage out? And finally when she tells him the third time, he says, how come you're always nagging? You weren't like this when we first got married.

Well, no, he didn't have garbage to carry out before he got married. Anyway, his wife had been saying, honey, I think you ought to go and talk to Miss Peters. He told his wife, I forgot more than that woman will ever know.

Yeah, maybe you have, but I think you ought to go and talk to her. So one day he went, and here's what happened. He tells what happened.

She invited him to sit down, and then she asked him just as bluntly as that, it began this way. She said, have you ever preached on that text in Matthew 6, it says, seek first the kingdom of God. He said, yes, I've often preached on it.

Then she asked him a second question. She said, do you always practice what you preach? Now she said, be honest. And he said, well, no, I can't say I've always lived that way.

She said, then here's a piece of paper. Would you take this pen and just write on this piece of paper, I am a hypocrite, because a person who doesn't practice what he preaches is a hypocrite, obviously. Isn't that

right? And he said, yes, I guess it is.

She said, just write down, I am a hypocrite. So he wrote down, I am a hypocrite. This went on for two hours, this kind of thing.

He said, when I walked out that door, I could walk right under the door. But he said, I was completely, thoroughly revived. And not many people know.

You know what's happening in Korea now, where they have meetings with a million people in one outdoor meeting. I heard a fellow in Saskatoon not long ago, and he was over in one of these meetings. They had a week of special evangelistic meetings, open air evangelistic meetings.

They had crowds of up to two million in one meeting. And when the invitation was given, they didn't come forward by the hundreds, no, yet by the thousands, they came forward by the tens of thousands. But you know what the basis of that is? Way back in 1932 or whenever, these two godly women went in there and began helping others to find out what it means to walk in the Spirit.

They were exercising a loosing ministry. That's what we're doing in the Canadian Revival Fellowship. We're trying to help God's people.

We're trying to help the churches to be free so they can have the power of the Spirit in their own personal life, in the corporate life of the church, for the glory of God. Loose Him and let Him go. And some of you need to be loose.

You've got a life. You're born again. Yes, you know Jesus Christ is your personal Savior, but you don't have any victory over sin, or you don't have any victory over particular sins, and you can't share Christ because you feel condemned.

You know your life is not what it ought to be in certain respects, and you do want to change, but you don't know how. We've come to help you. And please keep this in mind.

We do not feel superior. We do not feel we have arrived. But God has taught us certain things, and we're sharing with the people of God.

And actually, when you look back in the church history, we are not sharing anything new. It's not as if back in 1971 in Saskatoon, we suddenly discovered a brand new truth that nobody ever knew about before. Why, Spurgeon knew about this, and Luther knew about it.

And you can go back to John Huss, or Salvin Roe, or some of these people hundreds of years ago. Yes, longer than that. And there were people that knew what it meant.

Madame Daniel, that famous French mystic, she knew what it meant to walk in the Spirit. She lived for 14 years without ever having any sense of the presence of God in her life, she said. But all that while, God was using her life in a remarkable way, because she was dead to self, and alive unto God.

He has put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God. Many shall see it in fear, and shall trust in the Lord. Jesus sets me absolutely free.

He died on Calvary. What is your conscience, what is your heart saying to the Word of God this morning? Do you want God to knock off those shackles and set you free, give you victory over sin, whatever it might

happen to be? It may be the sin of unbelief, it may be the sin of pride, it may be a critical spirit, it may be envy or jealousy, it may be lust, it may be any one of many, many different things. Paul charged the church at Corinth with over 30 different sins.

But at the same time, in the same church, there were people walking with God, so that you come behind in no gift, waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. There was a real revival after Paul's first letter. The second letter makes it quite clear that the first letter had been used of God to produce a revival in the church at Corinth.

They had repented, thank God. And we too need to repent and come back to God as Christians in a new way. Five of the seven churches in the book of Revelation were called on to repent, repent, turn away from our failures and our sins, and come back to God.

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