

# Take Heed to Yourself

by Bill McLeod

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of taking heed to our ministry and staying focused on our purpose, rather than being distracted by the world and seeking to please people.*

**Duration:** 54:58

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:33, Acts 6:4, Romans 15:4, Colossians 4:17, 1 Thessalonians 5:21, 1 Timothy 4:16, 2 Timothy 4:10

**Topics:** "Sober Minded"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of personal preparation before delivering a message. He shares that he spends two hours preparing for a sermon, with the majority of that time dedicated to prayer and preparing his heart. The preacher believes that the effectiveness of a message is determined by the person delivering it, as it is an extension of their character. He warns against becoming like Demos, who abandoned his ministry due to his love for the world. The preacher encourages listeners to take heed of the ministry they have received and fulfill it faithfully.

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## Transcript

Well, it's good to be here and to share with you this afternoon. I hope you are praying. You know, it's really scary talking to Christian workers because it's hard for a preacher to be objective when he's listening to another preacher.

He says to himself, well, he's not a homiletical expert, you know, and he's not an exegetical expert, and he hasn't studied hermeneutics and all this stuff, you know, and this goes on, just ask me. And it's scary, really scary, talking to preachers, Christian workers, and it helps having your wives along. And so I'd seriously appreciate it very much if you really had an attitude of prayer because I don't really have anything to say, and I trust God has, and we do want to be a blessing and to bring something that will stay with your heart.

These have been great days together, and I've enjoyed them, and I know... Hi, Wally. You have too, at least many of you have told us that, and we're sorry it's over. Colossians 4.17 is my text.

It's kind of almost like a postscript to the letter to the church at Colossae. A little extra note that Paul has for a certain preacher who perhaps was not doing too well. And so he said, And say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you fulfill it.

And we need this kind of exhortation from time to time, lest we go beyond this and become like Demas, 2 Timothy 4.10, where Paul said, Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world. Now, Paul had mentioned Demas in other epistles, and at that time he was a fellow worker unto the kingdom of God. But something had happened, and his heart fell in love with the world again, and he forsook Paul and forsook the work, forsook the ministry God had called him to do, and he was gone.

And just a little note of warning by Paul to Archippus, apparently he had slowed down. Perhaps he had never speeded up, I don't know. But there was some danger, and Paul knew about it, that this man was not really giving himself to the work of God, to the ministry God had given him in the measure that he should.

The exhortation was needful. It's in the Bible because it's needful today also. When Paul said in Romans 15 that whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that could be said of all the New Testament as well as the Old.

It's all here as we understand and know for our good and for our blessing. Take heed then to the ministry which you have received in the Lord that you fulfill it. Paul said, I speak before God in Christ, and that's how we have to minister before God in Christ.

And as unto God, the Bible speaks about people ministering unto the Lord and fasting. And as Christian workers, we have to, I think, first of all, have a clear picture of what God wants us to do, what God has called us to be and do, and then give ourselves wholly to it. Paul used that very phrase, give yourself wholly to them.

Meditate upon these things. Give yourselves wholly to them that your profiting may appear to all. Let there be nothing as important as the ministry that God has given to you, let nothing else take its place or run even close to it, because it takes all our time, it demands all our time, all our energy, the ministry that God has given us.

Now you remember Paul said in 1 Corinthians 4 that we are made a theater to the world, to angels and to men, a spectacle. Well, as you probably know, the Greek word is theater, to the world, the world around us, the unconverted world, to angels, good angels, fallen angels, and then to men. I would think he means here Christian men, that he's making some kind of difference between men and the world.

And whether we like it or not, it's still true for all of us that we are a theater. We're on stage. We are being watched.

And part of God's program is that through the church He might show to the universe His manifold wisdom. Can He do that through you and I? Can He count on us that when demons watch us, God can say, Have you considered my servant Job? When good angels watch us, their hearts are not grieved. When the world watches us, we think that the world has to be angry at us all the time or we're not really serving God.

That's not really what it says. It says the common people heard Jesus gladly. They were not the ones that got Him in trouble, you know.

And it wasn't the common people that got Paul in trouble either. And more than that, the Bible speaks about us being acceptable to God and approved of men. And we can be approved of men and accepted before God.

A theater. Sometimes we wish we could live like normal people and just even when the windows are open in the summertime, scream at the kids like all the neighbors do. Or holler at your wife.

Or tell the deacons off. I remember a preacher one time. He'd been in the church six years.

He was resigning. And he told me, he said, Next Sunday is my last Sunday. And are they ever going to get it? I'm going to blow them out of the water.

And I'm telling you, I couldn't put on the face he had on, but I was kind of a little bit scared that he was going to start a little soon. Boy, he was really going to tell them what they needed to be told. I said, Cliff, you were there for six years.

If you couldn't tell them in six years, you can't tell them in 60 minutes. And I talked him out of it. I said, You leave a bad legacy, a bad taste in their mouths.

You make it difficult for the preacher coming in. You can't do things like this. You might feel like it, but you can't do it.

Kick the cat or do something else, but don't take it out on your church. And as far as I know, I don't think he kicked the cat. I'm not even sure he had one.

Then, as you know, we ought to be an example. A theater and an example. An example to the believers.

Paul says, 1 Timothy 4, In word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity. An example to the believers. Well, let's just follow through on the theater idea.

It's maybe another thing we don't like too well to think that all the eyes are on me and I have to always say the right things and have the right kind of reaction and smile sweetly when maybe I'm mad. Sometimes we don't like this. In word, let no corrupt communication, and the word there means rotten, let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth but that which is good to the use of edifying, upbuilding people, not tearing people down.

Speak evil of no man, the Word of God says. Speak evil of no man. The world's doing that all the time and many Christians are doing it but we as Christian leaders should not do this, not fall into that error, into that sin because it really is a sin.

In word, in conduct, in love, there's a verse that says, By love serve one another. Hereby we perceive the love of God because He laid down His life for us and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. I think that verse was really intended for preachers, for Christian workers.

We have to give ourselves as Christ gave Himself, for God's children, for God's people. And so, if I'm not prepared to do this, I ought to get out of the ministry. It's demanding, yes, but it's rewarding also.

And it's the only way we can really please God. It's not just what we say on Sunday morning and Sunday evening. That's just a small part of it.

I'm sure you've read this. I've read this. Phineas said, If I'm called unexpectedly to deliver a message, I only have two hours to prepare.

I spend an hour and a half in prayer preparing my heart and a half an hour preparing the message because what I am determines what the message is. I make it better or make it worse by saying it because it goes through me, through not just my personality. That's a very small part of it.

It's what I am. The message is an extension of the person I am. And if it's not, I'm just saying things which have no appeal to people at all.

They're not moved by it. They're not helped by it. And they might go home saying it was a nice sermon, but it hasn't done anything.

It hasn't helped anybody. It hasn't exhorted. It hasn't rebuked.

So, word, conduct, love, spirit. Are you enthusiastic? You remember Jacob before Pharaoh? His testimony. You remember that? When Pharaoh said, How old are you? I mean, what a glorious opportunity.

I've served God all these years. It's been marvelous. I've seen thousands of answers to prayer.

God has used me. It's just been so great. Is that what he said? No.

What a testimony. Few and evil have the days of the years of my pilgrimage been, and I have not attained until the days of the years of my father's and their pilgrimage. You know, Pharaoh almost caught pneumonia.

I'm glad it's in the Bible, but there was not much spirit there. I mean, nothing to attract someone else. It says he blessed Pharaoh.

I wonder what that means. Because after he was gone when Pharaoh thought about the blessing and then thought about the testimony, it just didn't fit. Somehow it didn't fit.

In spirit, in faith, we have to lead our people in our faith. You know, sometimes when preachers get together, you find they're worrying just as much about finances and money as anybody else is. And sometimes they're even worse.

We're not on top of it. We're under it. And sometimes people... Like, see, you know, I get into a lot of churches, and they'll say things to me.

I have to be so careful when I'm listening. I never allow people to run their pastor down or this kind of thing. But sometimes people will tell me, you know, our pastor, he's always hinting about money.

Or he's always talking about, you know, how badly he feels. And they say, it's so depressing. And people, we have to be so careful in these areas.

And I hope you're not thinking I'm laying too heavy a trip on you because we'll deal with that a little later on. An example for the believers to follow in word and conduct, in love and spirit, in faith, in purity. These are important things.

Approved to God. Study to show yourself approved unto God. Are you waiting and expecting to hear the Lord say someday, Well done, thou good and faithful servant.

Are you caught up in this success syndrome? What do you think success is? Success is not a growing church. Success is finding the will of God and doing it, even if the church gets smaller and you get fired. You know, when Paul talked to the elders of the Ephesians church, he told them your church is going to have a bad time.

It's going to get smaller, not larger. It doesn't sound like a success story. But you know, sometimes, what he really said was this, I know, he said, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.

Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. And I'm sure it happened. Just as it happens in churches today.

Success is finding the will of God and doing it, no matter what the personal cost is. And the sooner we get freed and emancipated from the success syndrome, the better for us. I was caught up in that at one time.

I'll tell you, if somebody left my church and went to another church, I just about had a heart attack. I fretted inwardly. I fumed.

I fussed. I asked all kinds of questions. I tried to figure out an answer to give to my people when they asked me why Mr. and Mrs. Jones left my church.

And my stock answer was, they're church hoppers. They won't stay there long either, you know. I couldn't say, they found the grass greener over there.

Because you know what that means. That I'm in trouble. And I was always scheming and trying to protect myself.

You know, you want to have a good report at the end of the year. They say when a preacher says the church was comfortably well filled, he means if everybody laid down, they could have a comfortable sleep. And so when we try to make it look good, we sometimes stretch the truth.

Not just a little bit, sometimes a great deal. I don't know if you heard about this fellow. He was praying for revival.

And he got his bag and went out looking for bones. And finally, he found a complete skeleton. He brought it in.

And he set the bones up in this chair. And he glued them together, wired them all up. And finally, after a lot of work, he had one skeleton sitting in this chair just grinning at him.

And he felt real good. You know, it looked like the start of a revival. So then he went out with his bag and he got some more bones.

And he did the same thing. And finally, he had two grinning skeletons. Then he had three.

And then he had four. So then he phoned the general superintendent and said, hey brother, we've got a revival on our hands. But while he was talking to the general superintendent, a big truck went by the church and shook the church.

And all of them came unglued and fell on the floor. And they had to start all over again. And sometimes that's how it is in our churches because we're working without God.

We're trying to do it ourselves. And we have those kind of experiences. And it goes on and on and on and on.

Study to show yourself approved unto God. And when you get to the place, dear brethren, where it doesn't matter to you that much what anybody says, what anybody does, what anybody thinks, all that matters is that God is pleased. Then you're in the place God wants you to be.

If God wants to take half of your church and move it somewhere else, let Him do it. Did you hear the goldfish bowl thing? You know, you've got your Baptist bowl or whatever here, and you've got your goldfish here and there's Nazarene and Pentecostal and Lion's Bowls all around. I'm not saying the Baptists are higher.

No, we can put it any way you want. Anyway, a fish jumps out of your goldfish bowl, and some preacher would much rather they landed on the floor and expired than if they landed in somebody else's bowl. And people, it's nothing more or less than a pride thing from start to finish.

Now, I had people in my church, and for the life of me, I couldn't understand why God didn't move them away. Then the people that were really good, He was moving them away, and I thought He had it all wrong. And I remember telling God, Lord, I don't know what You're doing.

Somehow You've got these things all crossed up. Why are You taking these people and leaving these people? I assumed because I couldn't help them that God couldn't help them. And He showed me what He could do later on when I got out of the way.

I looked on it as being my church. And I didn't interpret this as being pride, but God showed me after a while, nothing more or less than stinking pride. That's all it was.

It wasn't my church. It was His church. And He could do what He wanted with it.

And I had to praise Him. Let them all go. And I still had to praise God.

And I got the place where I could do that. Boy, that was a great relief when I could praise God when good people left. I mean, that's victory.

And really, thank God from your heart and mean it. All right? They're proved unto God. And then, to go back to Romans 14, 17, 18, we gave part of the verse before.

It says, The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. And that's more important than preaching sermons. As a matter of fact, if we don't have this, let's not preach sermons.

All right? The kingdom of God is not meat and drink. The Old Testament kingdom was. When David became king, he dealt to every man in Israel a flagon of wine and some bread and some meat.

And then, of course, Hebrews says the Old Testament system stood only in meat and drink, meats and drinks and different washings and carnal ordinances imposed on the people until the time of Reformation. That was the Old Testament kingdom of God. The Old Testament kingdom of God was in word.

3.2 times as many words in the Old Testament as in the New. But no power. The New Testament kingdom is not in word, but in power.

So the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, for He that in these things serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved of men. First of all, acceptable to God. The sermons I prepare and preach, are they acceptable to God? Or do I throw a bunch of junk in to make people think I'm really giving them some pearls of wisdom? Paul said, My speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.

Why? So your faith will not stand in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God. That's why when sometimes preachers leave the church, the whole thing falls apart, because they had their faith stuck in the wisdom of their preacher who could really wind the words out. But he wasn't really walking with God.

He never had the power of God. And their faith was in the wrong place. Alright, acceptable to God and approved of men.

The kingdom of God. Righteousness, peace, joy in the Holy Spirit. I remember many years ago, a lady from one of my churches, she came and said, Oh, Pastor, I wish you'd quit scolding us all the time.

Now I wasn't aware of the fact that I was scolding them, but I sat down and thought it over. I apologized to her. I began to think it over and I realized, yeah, to some extent I was scolding the people.

As a matter of fact, I was scolding them for not doing things that I wasn't doing. I mean, the Lord showed me that. Nobody else could have.

A good study in the Bible, by the way, would be to take a concordance and look up all the places in the Old and New Testament where the two words take heed occur together. Old Testament, New Testament. Take heed unto yourself.

Never mind the people. Take heed unto yourself and then unto the doctrine. It's much more important I be right than my sermon be right.

Because if I'm not right, no matter what happens, my sermon can't be right. So take heed unto yourself. In Proverbs 4, keep your heart, it means guard your heart with all diligence because out of it are the issues of life.

And I know from my own experience if my heart isn't right, I can't preach. If I have a grudge against somebody, I can't preach. If there's something wrong God's speaking to my heart about, I just can't preach.

It's terrible. Isn't it, brethren, terrible to preach when your heart isn't right? It's an awful experience. And may God make it a lot worse until we learn to deal with these things before we get up there in the pulpit.

Now at one time, what I used to do was this because I was struggling over this crucifixion with Christ doctrine. When I was first converted, a friend of mine sent me a copy of the book Born Crucified by L.A. Maxwell so I knew I was supposed to be crucified with Christ right from the very beginning. But not in any sense criticizing Brother Maxwell.

For me it was probably my own stupidity. I didn't see in the book how to make it personal. I saw the whole thing but not how to make it personal.

So I struggled for years with the thing. So here's what I finally was doing. I would psych myself up on Saturday night because I had to fly high on Sunday, you know, preaching twice.

So I had to, maybe teaching a Bible class, I had to somehow on Saturday now spend hours trying to get up on the cross and being in the right frame of mind for Sunday, knowing full well that Monday I'd probably fall off the cross again. Then I'd have to go through this on Wednesday, you know, for the prayer meeting on Wednesday night, the Bible study. And then go through the whole thing week after week and this is what I was doing.

But I didn't want to live that way. And it bothered me. You know, then I used to talk to others like Harry Ironside talked to people in his own particular group.

And finally he picked out a man that he was sure was filled with the Spirit walking with God. And he got him alone and said, Brother, I'm struggling terribly in my Christian life and I don't have the answers. I've been watching you and in all our organization I think you're the man walking with God.

Can you help me? And the fellow burst into tears and said, I've been watching you. I thought you had the answers. I was going to ask you.

And neither of them had. And that's the way I felt. But God made it very simple.

And I'm glad He did. It wasn't a billy son. He said God put all the cookies on a low shelf because He knew that most of His people were not giraffes.

And it's really simple. We complicate it sometimes. Man, you know, some of us should get a couple of degrees in this for complicating simple truths and spinning it out for 50 minutes, you know, making it real hard for people to understand.

Some of us are experts at that. I think I was myself at one time. I read something some of the preachers said.

Every time I preach, I use some words that I know my people don't understand just to let them know I'm ahead of them. As a matter of fact, some of the words he used, he didn't understand himself. But then the people didn't know that.

So, you know, he wasn't in trouble. But I'm sure he was in trouble with God. Take heed unto yourself.

Galatians 2.20. It wasn't actually Galatians 2.20 that came to life in my heart. That was all part of it. But it was Romans 6, 10 and 11.

That's really what hit me. When I saw how simply Paul put it, Romans 6, 6, knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him in order that the body of sin might be rendered powerless, annulled, destroyed, different translations say, that from now on we should not serve sin for He that is dead is freed from sin. I read that.

Kept on reading down. Got to verse 10. In that He died, that's Jesus.

He died unto sin. Once. Once and for all.

But now once in the end of the world He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. But now once. In that He died, He died unto sin once.

But in that He lives, He lives unto God. Well, I meditated on that. That illustration.

And then came the application. Likewise. And the light started to dim.

Likewise. Oh, in the same way. Reckon.

I knew the Greek word there had seven or eight different English equivalents. Words like impute or consider or think or believe or esteem or count or at count. They're all translated from the same Greek word.

So I thought about that. Reckon, count, think, believe, esteem, at count, consider. Then I thought to myself, if Paul was writing to one person, he would have said, Reckon you also yourself.

But he was writing to a church, so he said, yourselves. So, I have to reckon myself to be what? Well, really, to be what God said I was in verse 6. And the light dimmed. What a night I had.

What a night. And I did it. I reckoned myself to be what God said I was.

It was as simple as that. And the next day, I could see God work in my life in a brand new way. I haven't attained to perfection, you know.

Just ask my wife. She's sitting right there. But it's been so different since I came to understand what this was all about.

Reckon you also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. Think of the 10 lepers for a minute.

Can I use that illustration? They were Jews and Samaritans and they knew that the word of God said, the law of God said, if you were a leper and you suddenly discovered your leprosy was gone, then you had the right to go and show yourself to the priest for inspection. He would inspect you, shave all your hair off. There was a seven-day waiting period.

He would re-inspect you. If you were still clean, you were accepted back into the village again. Now they knew that.

When they saw Jesus, they said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. Now He didn't come as He often had to others and touch them. Lepers healed them.

He stood there and said, Go, show yourself to the priest. Now, they could have done what lots of us do with some of the promises of God. Just stand in a circle and just rationalize yourself out of the blessing.

Elmer, you've got it. Joe, you've got it. Harry, you've got it.

Dick, you've got it. Jim, you've got it. What's the point? We can't go to the priest.

The law of God says you only go to the priest providing you're cleansed. And we're not cleansed yet. So how can we go to the priest? They didn't rationalize.

They obeyed. And it says, And it came to pass that as they went, they were cleansed. Not when they were standing still.

So likewise, see what they had to do, the superior people, they had to reckon they were healed when they were. When all the censors told them you've still got it, brother, they had to reckon they never had it when they had it. And that's when God's blessing and power came.

Now, Paul in 2 Thessalonians 1 put it this way. He spoke about God fulfilling the work of faith with power. Not the act of faith, but the work of faith.

It's not a simple act of faith. It's just I keep on believing. That's all.

And as I do, God puts a power in the picture. Well, take heed unto yourself. Make sure you're walking with God, filled with God's Spirit, filled with the love of God.

And could I just interject something that ought to be obvious and sometimes isn't. And that is, there is no such thing, in my opinion, as being filled with God's Spirit and not being filled with the love of God. I don't have it because I've had some kind of dramatic experience.

Moody, he said, I was so filled with the love of God, I thought I could take the whole world into my heart. Finney, I felt as if I were being fanned with gigantic wings of love. J.B. Earl, 150,000 people found Christ through his labors.

He said at 2 o'clock in the morning, God filled me with the fullness of Christ's love. Whitefield, filled with the love of God. Wesley preached his funeral sermon and said, people frequently ask, what was the reason for his astonishing success and eloquence? And Wesley said, he spoke from a heart that was filled with the love of God.

When I get to heaven, I hope they'll allow one or two of these preachers to preach again. Maybe I won't hope that when I get there. Probably not, but thinking of it now, I'd like to hear Whitefield preach.

I'd like to hear Wesley preach. I'd like to hear Spurgeon preach. I'd like to hear some of these people we've read about.

I heard Spurgeon, or pardon me, Moody on a recording. Do you know there is a recording? It's called Yesterday's Voices. It's the only recording they have of Moody's voice and he's quoting from the Beatitudes.

And it does something to your heart just to hear Moody's voice. And Sankey singing the old glory song. Beautiful.

Billy Sunday preaching a little sermon there. And John Brown and other people like this great Yesterday's Voices. What about today's voices? Filled with the love of God, filled with the Spirit of God, coming through a clean channel.

This is what God wants. Otherwise we can't take heed to the ministry God has given us. It's not a case of mechanically doing the things by rote that we know we should be doing.

Dear men, and I say it to myself as I say it to you, it's a matter of being filled with the love of God, walking with God, giving time to God. This little five minute fellowship thing a day that most of us do, it's not worth

the snap of your fingers. It's an insult to God.

Absolute insult to God. I keep asking people, what do you think Moses was doing in the mountain 40 days and 40 nights, twice no less, 80 days and 80 nights in the mountain? Well, people say, God was giving him the Ten Commandments. You mean to say our God is so stupid it took Him 80 days and 80 nights to write up the Ten Commandments? Well, I could do that in five minutes.

So what were they doing all the rest of the time? It dawned on me one day they were having fellowship. God had found a man that would talk to Him. They would have fellowship with Him.

They would listen to Him. And God said, now Moses, he's not like other prophets. Other prophets, I speak to them in visions and dreams.

Not Moses. We talk face to face. God had found a man who didn't think that 80 days and nights without eating or drinking was too much.

He just wanted to be alone with God. And God is looking for people like that. He's looking for preachers like that.

Oh, dear men that will spend, and women that will spend time with God and fellowship with Him. Truly, our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ. Some acute observer said, the average Christian does not have fellowship with God.

He has fellowship with other saints about God. That's probably true. And that has to change.

Did you ever notice in John 4 that we're told ten times to worship God? We're also told ten times to work for God under different words like work and soul and wreath and so on. Ten times. But did you notice this? That all ten references to worship occur before there's one reference to work? All ten of them.

Which means I can't work until I worship and my service must rise out of my worship. I get my messages from God. Not from some book of sermons.

But God tells me, God shows me because He knows what the needs are. Take heed unto yourself and then unto the doctrine. Continue in them for in doing this you will both save yourself and those that hear you.

Take heed to your prayer life. We've been talking a lot about that in these days. And of course, when we talk about worshipping God that has to do with prayer as well.

Prayer and praise. Alone with God. Listening to God.

What do you think watch and pray means? Some people think it means, you know, with one eye open to make sure that nobody steals your car. That's not the idea. Watch.

So I'm just watching. Someone told me the other day the night before I spoke on the subject of the return of God's glory. A certain brother told me, he said, you know, I spent all last night watching and praying for you.

I tell you, that just kind of melted my heart. Watching. Saying nothing.

Maybe just looking into God's face. Telling God after a while how wonderful He is. Worshipping.

Singing. Alone with God. This is what makes us strong, brethren.

It's easy to get sermons. I could do a dozen sermons a day. It's easy to get sermons.

But it's hard to get messages. And Haggai, I remember, spoke about the Lord's messenger in the Lord's message. I've gone to a pulpit sometimes with three messages running around in my head wondering which one to preach.

That's why some preachers, they number them. It's easier to figure out them. You don't have to think about a title or a message.

Just think about the number. I suppose I'll get some kind of an aid to preaching sometime where you just push a button and stand and open your mouth. The words come out or maybe it will flash up on the screen or something.

I don't know. I hope that time never comes. I hope the Lord comes back before then or I get to heaven before then and please God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.

It's mechanical enough now as it is. My prayer life? Spurgeon? People mistake... You know, they don't understand him. They think because he had this golden bell voice that people talked about and he could be heard by 20,000 people without any voice amplification at all.

And they think because of his astonishing gift God gave him, his eloquence and so on, this is what did it. But you ask Spurgeon. I was just reading a letter Spurgeon wrote in the book.

And he said, 500 in prayer meeting. He had it underlined with three lines. It's the only thing underlined in the whole letter.

500 in prayer meeting. That's where he just started off in New Park Street Chapel. When he got there, they only had 5, 4, or 5 attending the prayer meeting.

And they had 60 people in the church seating 1,200 or 1,300 people. At the end of the first year there was 500 in the prayer meeting. And the church was jammed to the door so they enlarged the building to seat 3,000.

And when they had the dedication service it was twice too small. Then they had to build a tabernacle seating 6,000. And then he preached for 35 years.

But prayer... He emphasized that above everything. So when he was preaching there was 400 people down below praying. All the time he preached.

And he gave full credit. He said, If God leaves me for a minute I'll be just like anybody else. It's God.

He kept telling people, People, it's God. It's not me. I know a preacher who was having great success and he said to his people, You people are starting to make a God out of me.

You're looking at me and talking to me as if I was doing it. If you don't stop that God will take me out of it. And God did.

He was killed in a plane crash. The church didn't fall apart, thank God. But they could never forget what their pastor had told them.

Don't make a God out of me. Spurgeon never did. You know, his language at the communion table was so extravagant that some people said, It can't be real.

He can't know Jesus that way. What they meant was, I don't know Jesus that way. One of the sermons he preached on the name of Jesus, that's one sermon I would like to hear.

I've read it. It's incredible. The whole thing.

I mean, when you're through all you can see is Jesus. They said he preached this and the last three words he uttered in the sermon was the word Jesus three times in a row, each time at the top of his voice. And then he fell back in the chair totally exhausted and he couldn't even move.

I say to myself, Brother, that's preaching. Sometimes when he was preaching and the wind was in his sails, the whole congregation leaped to their feet and they stood there. They didn't want to miss a movement of a hand.

The Spirit of God was so on him. But he spent hours with George Mueller, the famous man of faith from Bristol, England. He spent hours in prayer and he got his people to pray.

And that was the secret of the whole thing. And today we try and duplicate what he did without doing it the way he did it. And again, it just doesn't work.

It just doesn't work. What field? Well, I should say something else because this might be something, brethren, that some of us could pick up. Do you know that Spurgeon and his church frequently called special weeknight prayer meetings to deal with specific problems? Maybe it was missions, home missions, co-porters.

They had 60 or 70 co-porters in England that went out from the church. It might be the college, the preacher's college, or something else. He'd call a special prayer meeting and hundreds, sometimes thousands of people would come to a specially called prayer meeting.

And then, besides the public prayer meeting which they had on Monday nights, they had a special prayer meeting every week just to pray for the ministry. Nothing else. Hundreds would come, sometimes thousands, just to pray for the ministry.

Nothing else. He certainly was not under any illusion that was in himself. It was God.

And He said it many times in His sermons. You read His sermons. There's a book.

Here's 12 messages on the Holy Spirit. Some of the greatest teaching on the Holy Spirit you'll ever come across. He was just painfully aware if God ever leaves me, nothing will happen.

Take heed unto yourself, unto the doctrine, unto your prayer life. Whitfield, I was going to say something about him for a moment or two. He spent hours daily in prayer.

And the last two or three years of his life when he was so ill they thought he'd drop dead any time. You know when he came out from those great field meetings? Thousands, 50,000 sometimes, canvas-length, Scotland, 100,000 people in one meeting. And there he preached and loved voice amplification.

The last two or three years every time he preached when he got into the house they laid out four chairs and he laid across the chairs and people stood around praying that God would let him preach another time. And they got a young man to stay with him just in case he needed help during the night. And after he died, the young man said, it's all true.

It's all true. Everything you've heard about him is true. He loves God with all his heart.

He said, I've seen him on his knees, so weak he could hardly kneel, crying to God three hours, four hours, shedding tears for the souls of men. He said, it's all true. It's all true.

Paul said, be followers of me even as I also am of Christ. Whitefield said, I try to pattern my life after Paul and Jesus. Spurgeon said, I try to pattern my life after Whitefield and Paul and Jesus.

And it's good to have somebody like this we can sort of pattern our life after. Oh, to be like thee, blessed Redeemer. Oh, to be like thee, pure as our heart.

Come in thy richness. Come in thy fullness. Stamp thine own image deep on my heart.

What a prayer. And we all need to pray that. I need to pray it.

I would start adding special type prayer meetings to the church. As I mentioned yesterday, last night, the thing we did here in Ebenezer, just adding, not all at once, a men's prayer meeting, a deacon's prayer meeting, ten o'clock prayer meeting, thing in the home for the ladies, just as God might lead. And I would keep on doing that.

And I don't have the slightest doubt that there would come a time of great revival. I don't have any doubt at all. I don't know how long it might take.

That's in God's hands. He has to change things and so on and prepare things. You see, the Spirit was given on the day of Pentecost and has never been taken away.

This is the age of revival. This is the age of the Holy Spirit. This is the age of grace.

This is the age of the gospel. This is the age of missions. So we should be expecting the Spirit of God to come.

I was in a church in Nashville, Tennessee two years ago. The church isn't quite ten years old. They have eleven pastors.

They're running around a thousand Sunday mornings. I was speaking there. I don't know why they had me come.

I'm sure I was blessed more than they were. But to be with those brethren and to pray with the pastors and then to watch, I learned all I could to watch the ways in which they put prayer first in the church. And the head pastor told me, he said, we have a new revival, a new outpouring of the Spirit in this church every three months on the average.

He said it usually happens on a Sunday morning. The Spirit of God comes. He takes the work totally out of our hands.

The whole church is melted down before God. Sin is dealt with. Sinners are converted.

He said it happens, Bill, on the average of once every three months. No gimmicks. No big programs.

Nothing like that. People coming to Christ. You know what that church did? The city of Nashville, the American nation was alerted to a problem.

The Thai people, refugees, and they guaranteed to take, I forget how many thousands the state was going to take. And Nashville, the city, decided to take 250 of these Thai people. So they brought them over and they fed them for a week and gave them a few dollars and left them on their own.

They didn't know the language. They didn't have any skills. And they were in deep trouble meeting together, wondering what to do.

And this church heard about it and sent a delegation over. And they found a man, someone that could speak Thai, and they went over with a delegation. And they said, we want to take your whole group under our church.

We'll be responsible for everybody. And they took that whole group into their church. They taught them English.

They found them jobs. They taught them the American culture. They did the whole thing.

And almost all of those people got saved. They got a Thai pastor for them. And they had meetings in that language in the home church there.

Now that was a big undertaking. And it cost them a lot of money, a lot of heartaches. But they did it because they were imbued and filled with the Spirit of God.

They're going to have to build a larger auditorium. The auditorium they have now will not contain the crowds that are coming. But that, bless my heart, does it challenge yours? Every three months, a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit? I'll tell you, the tears were flowing in my heart.

And I think down my face also when he told me this. I've been preaching 43 years. That's the first church I was ever in that told me that.

That the Spirit came every three months on the average and revived the church. Well, that's beautiful. But Brethren, it's based on prayer.

They emphasize that above everything else. And churches I get into, and I get into churches from time to time that are really walking with God, walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost and they're being multiplied. And I thank God for such experiences.

There are few, but I thank God for every one because it's such a blessing to me. So often you get into churches where there's division, sometimes splits and all this kind of thing. And they bring you in and expect you've got some kind of magic that you can kind of heal all this over somehow in six days when they've been fighting for 16 years maybe.

And it's such a joy to get into a church that's a New Testament church, walking with God, filled with the Holy Spirit because sometimes if this didn't happen, you'd get to a place where you didn't believe it was happening anymore. And you might even begin to doubt that it ever did happen. But then you see it happening.

There's an echo in your heart and you thank God for it. I'm sure you understand that what I'm really saying is, brethren, it's not out there, it's in here. The problem's in here.

And my church, I can't lift my people any higher than I am myself. Even to try and do it is hypocrisy. If I'm not putting prayer first, I'm a hypocrite to ask my people to do it.

If I'm not sacrificing and giving, I'm a hypocrite to ask my people to do that. If I'm not sharing Christ with the lost, I don't have no right whatever to ask my people to do this. And this is a problem in many of our churches.

One thing in the Canadian Revival Fellowship we would not want to see happen is this. We wouldn't want any of you to go home defeated. Maybe you came here defeated.

I hope you're not going to go home defeated. You don't have to. God can meet your need.

And we're here to help. We'll end the meeting formally in just a few moments with prayer. Could I say this? If there's a spiritual need in your heart and you want that need dealt with and met, would you just stay behind? Stay behind.

We'll know why you've stayed. There's brethren here who'd be glad to stay and pray and counsel with you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.

That's the first half of James 4.8. The second half says cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Right? Be afflicted and mourn and weep. Let your laughter return to mourning and your joy to heaviness.

Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord and He shall lift you up. That's God's recipe for personal revival. Submit yourself therefore to God.

Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners.

Purify your hearts, you double-minded. Be afflicted and mourn and weep. Let your laughter return to mourning and your joy to heaviness.

Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord and He will lift you up. And we need to repent for things we've perhaps been doing, programs we've had in our churches that are really not of God, not necessary, nothing more than a confession of the fact we don't have the power of God's Spirit so we have to do something else. Please, whatever you do, don't feel I'm your judge.

If you could see my heart, you'd never think that. I'm your brother in Christ. I fail God sometimes.

When I do, I've got to get down like anybody else and ask God's forgiveness. Sometimes I hold grudges. Sometimes I get upset with people.

Sometimes when I see three people lined up at a conference like this, they all want to talk to me and I know it's going to be counseling and so on. Sometimes I resent that. I have to ask God to forgive me.

I'm totally ineffective. I'm just like anybody else. But we know the way to the cross, the way to the throne of grace, and that's the secret of victory.

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